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Official Records

10th plenary meeting
Friday, 24 September 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping .... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, President of the Republic of Cape Verde

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, President of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, President of the Republic of Cape Verde, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rodrigues Pires (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation from a French text provided by the delegation*): I should like at the outset, Mr. President, to hail your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I would also like to extend to you our best wishes for success in carrying out your mandate, a mandate which reflects the honour bestowed on your country, the Republic of Gabon, by the international community.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, for his selfless commitment to the causes of the United Nations and of Africa in particular.

I believe this is also an appropriate time to pay tribute to and commend the actions of the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his considerable contribution to promoting the universality of the United Nations.

My country, the Republic of Cape Verde, is among the small island States. We believe that our States, as a result of their specific characteristics, deserve a special hearing from the international community. In the economic, social and ecological spheres, those States are confronting shortcomings and restrictions specific to them, and these must be duly taken into account.

Through its own efforts, but also through the necessary contribution of the international community, Cape Verde is now preparing to better itself and its condition as a least developed country (LDC). My country continues to suffer from a precarious situation which cannot be ignored or minimized. In addition, the small island States often represent unique physical and human realities which form a genuine heritage of mankind. For these and other reasons, I would like here to launch an appeal in favour of the small island States.

The international community is going through a particularly complex period marked by challenges of many kinds. We are aware that it is only by focusing on peace, stability, security, dialogue and respect for diversity of interests and cultures, in an atmosphere of freedom, that we can create an international environment conducive to the just settlement of the serious problems we are encountering today.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

War does not have to be inevitable. Moreover, given the very advanced stage of civilization which mankind has achieved, I think it would be relevant to ask whether it is time to leave behind the concept formulated by the outstanding nineteenth-century German military theoretician Clausewitz, who stated that war is a continuation of policy through other means. I think, rather, that it is by relying on negotiations, dialogue and the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the interests and rights of all parties, that we can tap the potential for avoiding the need for war as a means of resolving national or international disputes.

Finally, it is with respect for international law, drawn up with the participation of all and equally shared and respected by all — a respect which permeates the principles and purposes of the United Nations — that we can find a response leading to a peaceful, prosperous and just world: the world which mankind clearly wishes to see.

I would like to reiterate here and now our absolute rejection of the unwarranted use of violence and our unequivocal condemnation of the use of terrorism as a way of resolving political disputes. The trivialization of life and death, which is utterly condemnable, also dehumanizes its proponents and opens the way to the worst kinds of wrongs in relations between human communities. This is why the struggle for peace cannot be halted, and why everyone, especially the United Nations, has the imperative duty to contribute to breaking the cycle of violence and opening the way to peaceful coexistence among nations and human communities.

Among the other social ills afflicting our planet which can be effectively combated are hunger and poverty. Their eradication is in fact one of the objectives of the Millennium agenda. I am convinced that success in combating hunger and poverty will have unquestionably positive global effects that would promote unity and harmony within the human family, and would strengthen human rights, including the most sacred and vital right — the right to life. It would also promote the material and moral enrichment of all of human society. It would contribute to the creation of conditions that are a prerequisite for improving international security by lessening migration and bridging the gap between rich and poor, thus eliminating the reasons for the frustration of millions of poor and hungry individuals throughout today's world.

Another tragedy that requires action is HIV/AIDS, which is mortgaging the future of many countries, particularly in Africa. There is an urgent need to advance and guarantee effective international solidarity in order to root out from the daily lives of millions of human beings the spectre of hunger, poverty and pandemic illnesses. It is my belief that mankind has the resources and potential which will allow us to realize this marvellous dream.

The African continent, of which my country and your country, Mr. President, are a part, continue to be faced with enormous and varied challenges. Regarding the critical issue of peace and political stability, we also note a genuine commitment on the part of African States to resolve conflicts and eliminate hotbeds of tension. But the political will of States, regional organizations and the African Union is not enough, and the international community's commitment and its indispensable contribution in the form of adequate resources are necessary for peace and security to become a reality for all our peoples within a reasonable period of time.

Peace is not merely the absence of war. Genuine peace requires sufficient time and confidence-building among parties, as well as a strategy for building peace. So too, peace and stability within States require institutions and policies that are inclusive and that respect and engage all sectors of nations and meet their legitimate political and economic aspirations, while at the same time ensuring the protection of their cultural identity.

There can be no doubt that, owing to profound changes in the scientific, technological and socio-political fields, a huge movement of democratization of human societies is under way, backed by the institutions of the rule of law. However, mere political democracy is not sufficient. The ordinary citizen must be guaranteed participation in public affairs and a decent, worthy and dignified life, since there can be no freedom without dignity.

It must also be recognized that there are still tenuous vestiges of the old orders, which must once and for all be rooted out and eliminated from relationships between individuals and communities, such as racism, religious and cultural discrimination, gender inequality, and scorn for the fundamental rights of indigenous human communities in various countries.

We must also ask whether democracy within States is reflected in relations among States, particularly when we note the existence of an imbalanced world in which the inequality of power between the haves and the have nots continues to grow day by day. Therefore, there is a critical need to promote the democratization of international relations by seeking better balance in relations among States. International democracy based on dialogue and cooperation among States and among cultures, on tolerance and respect for cultural diversity among communities and on human solidarity and respect for the legitimate political and material interests of all parties, of nations large and small would show itself in the implementation of genuine multilateralism in global governance. Herein undoubtedly lie the foundations for triumph over today's challenges and the assurance of a safe, peaceful, predictable and prosperous future for humanity.

In several months, the United Nations will mark 60 years of rich and intense life that has been filled with challenges, upheavals and extremely complex problems, but that has also been marked by innumerable victories and hopes for humanity. My country joined the community of nations in large part because of the intervention of the United Nations to promote the freedom and human rights of colonial peoples, for which we shall always be grateful. I believe that, in the light of the profound changes that have occurred over the past six decades in all areas of the international arena and the emergence of a new balance of forces and extremely complex challenges requiring urgent and immediate responses, it is becoming clear that we need to move forward with reform of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. In my view, the planned reform should, in addition to reflecting new global geopolitical realities, guarantee representativity and appropriate intervention and participation for all continents and all communities. From that perspective, we would then have a more balanced international community and a more equitable sharing of responsibility in the building of humanity's future.

Before concluding, I should like to highlight the successful actions carried out in the past few years by the United Nations under the leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has enabled us to keep on the international agenda substantive issues that confront many societies daily, which has enabled this universal institution to be in direct contact with concerns and challenges that are worrisome to all members of the human family.

Here, I should also like to honour the memory of all those who have served the United Nations and fallen victim to senseless acts resulting from intolerance and the terrorism of radical movements. I emphasize the need for all countries and all formal and informal institutions to guarantee and respect the security of such noble men and women, for they are on a mission to serve all of us.

I hope, Sir, that this fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, which is taking place under your presidency, will provide new gains for peace, justice, social progress and global stability.

Finally, I should like to reiterate the words of Pope John Paul II, the unquestionable moral authority of our time, in his appeal to world leaders on 1 January this year:

> "The United Nations ... needs to rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution and to become a moral centre where all the nations of the world feel at home ..."

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cape Verde for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, President of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Samoa warmly congratulates you, Mr. President, on your election to steer the course of the Organization's work at this critical time in its 59-year history. I know that you will continue the good work of your predecessor in highlighting the multidimensional nature of international security and the need to reform the United Nations so that our Organization responds more effectively to the current and emerging challenges facing our world.

Hardly a week goes by without an act of terrorism somewhere in the world assailing our senses. Such murderous acts, regardless of the cause or grievance advanced by their perpetrators, are utterly indefensible. Many innocent lives continue to be wasted, with people killed or maimed and multitudes displaced by heinous acts designed to undermine and destabilize the collective efforts of the international community to achieve peace and security for our societies. Samoa condemns, in the strongest terms, all acts of terrorism and will continue to take actions and contribute our support to the campaign against it.

Besides terrorism, other scourges to world peace and to the stability of our nations persist. The threat of weapons of mass destruction, poverty and hunger, environmental degradation, the trafficking and smuggling of human beings, HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are becoming perennial major threats to global security.

The campaign against terrorism can still be successful, but not merely by force of arms. Preventing safe havens for terrorists and closing off their sources of financing are just as crucial. But no less important is the necessity of addressing the root causes that feed terrorism.

No sensible administration can fail to be moved by the tragedy of Beslan and the humanitarian catastrophe of Darfur. The imperatives for action by the Organization and the international community to address those events and their causes have been eloquently articulated by leaders who have spoken earlier from this rostrum. I wish only to recall and emphasize that actions to arrive at solutions to those events and others like them must be carried out in accordance with the rule of law.

With regard to Iraq, Samoa deplores the daily violence that has killed and maimed so many people and the circumstances that have brought it about. We fully support the re-establishment of Iraq's sovereignty, and we pray for the success of a credible election process to create an Iraqi Government with a popular mandate.

Likewise, we can only pray and hope that a workable solution will be found soon for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, before many more lives are lost on both sides.

Last month, Samoa hosted, in the capital, Apia, the annual Pacific Islands Forum Summit of leaders. As the representative holding the current chairmanship of that group, I wish to inform the Assembly that the Pacific leaders again noted the dangers to the world of terrorism, and — to the Pacific region, in particular — of transnational crime, illicit drugs and the spread of small arms assault weapons. Consequently, the Pacific Islands Forum countries have strengthened their cooperation in counter-terrorism measures, as well as emphasized national efforts and regional cooperation in combating transnational organized crime and in building border-control capacities.

The Pacific Islands Forum is also committed to collective arrangements and mechanisms to assist regional Governments to recover from national conflicts and crises. The success of these arrangements, undertaken with the support of the United Nations, is already evident in the positive results of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. While much more remains to be done, Solomon Islands is making good and steady progress, and the Forum will remain engaged in sustaining the mission.

Similarly, peace has been achieved in Bougainville, with elections for an autonomous Bougainville Government to be held by the end of the year. The roles of the Governments of Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand, with the support of the Pacific Islands Forum, working together with the

United Nations Observer Mission, is critical in guiding Bougainville during this important period.

An important feature of the response mechanism put in place by the Pacific Islands Forum to assist regional Governments is its flexibility. The Pacific Islands Forum is now in the process of responding to a crisis in one of our member countries resulting from causes quite different from those in Solomon Islands and Bougainville.

In recognition of the importance of good governance for economic growth and sustainable development, the Pacific Islands Forum has invited its members to become parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. In strengthening further the institutions of good governance in Pacific nations, the important role of non-State actors and civil society was highlighted by the Pacific leaders.

One issue that the Pacific islands have brought to the attention of the United Nations over the years that remains relevant — not only for the Pacific — and that, very importantly, is advancing the cause of nuclear non-proliferation, is that of the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone Treaty. The Pacific Forum has again called on the United States to ratify the Protocols to the Treaty.

Although the Pacific Islands Forum has been heavily engaged in overcoming crises with which some of the regional Governments are grappling, several Pacific island nations, in addition to Australia and New Zealand, have nevertheless been contributing in ways we can to the United Nations peacekeeping efforts. As for my own country, we provide police to the United Nations peacekeeping missions in Timor-Leste and Liberia, in addition to those we have committed to Solomon Islands.

Clearly, our small nations are trying hard to contribute to the security and peace initiatives of the United Nations. However, national obligations — including reporting obligations for the various conventions and United Nations resolutions on security and terrorism — place an onerous burden on the infrastructure and administrative capacity of small States. We therefore seek the understanding of the Organization and encourage the appropriate United Nations bodies to explore innovative ways to help small States meet their commitments.

Mr. Spencer (Antigua and Barbuda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The challenges to and special needs of small island developing States are well known, and are reflected in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which has been in place for the past 10 years. Sadly, despite the commitments made 10 years ago at Barbados and during the 1999 mid-term review in this Hall, the achievement of those goals continues to elude us.

It is our fervent hope, however, that the International Meeting due to take place in Mauritius next January to comprehensively review the Barbados Programme of Action will provide an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate the political will and commit sufficient resources to allow our small island developing nations to overcome the unique challenges we face.

The series of hurricanes that wrought massive devastation in some island nations of the Caribbean and in the United States is a stark reminder of the extreme challenges faced by small island developing States and of their vulnerability to disasters. Our Pacific island nations, including my own country, know from our bitter experience of cyclones that regularly batter our region about the disheartening effect of such disasters in setting back, in a matter of hours, the hard-earned development achievements of many years.

The concerns and the vulnerability of our nations are therefore quite real. While we accept the primary responsibility for achieving the goals of the Programme of Action, the reality is that the support of the international community is indispensable to its success. We therefore call on the United Nations system and the international community to provide the necessary support to complement ongoing and future programmes, as well as for the implementation and monitoring of the Mauritius outcomes for the sustainable development of small island developing States.

Likewise, the importance of multilateral institutions such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in this process cannot be overemphasized. We therefore urge GEF to apply its rules of access and to simplify its disbursement procedures in order to take into account the special circumstances of small island developing States.

Trade is a vital component of sustainable development, especially for small island developing States. We therefore continue to urge that the vulnerabilities of small States be taken fully into account in the World Trade Organization negotiations, particularly with regard to special and differential treatment for small economies.

The review of the Millennium Development Goals next year will provide an opportunity for the international community to take stock of progress and to identify remedial strategies and commitments for the further realization of those Goals. Samoa remains committed to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The election of the second Deputy Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court just two weeks ago completes the process of the full institutionalization of the Court. Samoa warmly welcomes the broad complement of judges and officers of the Court and adds its voice in urging other United Nations Members to accede to the Rome Statute for the establishment of the Court. Given its role in upholding international humanitarian standards and in protecting human rights, the Court deserves the support of the international community to give it the full universality it requires.

We thank the Secretary-General and the previous President of the Assembly for their very commendable work in advancing the revitalization and reform of the Organization.

To this end, Samoa fully supports the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and looks forward to its report at the end of the year.

We believe that the outcome of United Nations reform should include the restoration of the primacy of the role of the General Assembly and the attainment of a more effective and efficient Secretariat.

In particular, we support the enlargement of the Security Council and strongly recommend the inclusion of Japan and Germany as permanent members.

Finally, I offer Mr. Ping my delegation's full support in the discharge of his numerous responsibilities, and I wish him well in his presidency.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Honourable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Manning (Trinidad and Tobago): Mr. President, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I extend congratulations to Mr. Ping on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. We are confident that his experience and diplomatic skills will enable him to discharge fully the weighty responsibilities of his office.

Permit me to convey to his predecessor, The Honourable Julian Hunte, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia, our deep appreciation of his efforts towards revitalization of the General Assembly.

I wish also to convey to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the full support of the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago as he continues the global initiatives of the United Nations towards making the world better and safer for all humanity.

Today Trinidad and Tobago is celebrating its twenty-eighth anniversary as a republic. Over our 42 years as an independent country, we have made significant strides in the development of our nation. We have maintained a strong tradition of democratic governance through an increasingly inclusive and multiparty political system; by respecting fully the constitutionally entrenched and internationally recognized fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual; and by ensuring strict adherence to the rule of law.

We have sought increasingly to diversify our economic base. Through consistent and sound macro-economic policies, together with prudent management and use of our resources, we have sustained more than a decade of positive economic growth, which last year was of the order of 13.2 per cent.

Our country has made significant strides in advancing the capabilities of our people through universal access to primary and secondary education. We have gone further through our State-sponsored preschool programme, which targets universal early childhood education by 2010, and by fully opening the gateway to tertiary education through support for every student, enhanced funding for deserving ones, and our recently established University of Trinidad and Tobago.

Our archipelagic Republic, populated by 1.3 million people of African, Indian, European, Chinese, Middle Eastern and mixed ancestries, constitutes a veritable microcosm of the people of the world. However, we have been able to foster racial harmony and religious tolerance through the collective embrace of the diversity of our people.

That approach, together with adherence to integrity and transparency in public affairs and equality of opportunity for all, has been essential to the continued peace, stability and progress we enjoy as we propose to make Trinidad and Tobago a beacon of integrity in the world.

Trinidad and Tobago has demonstrated remarkable strength and resilience in the face of a global environment characterized by rapid economic, social and other changes; this has mobilized us to embark on the realization of a bold new vision in the pursuit of our developmental agenda. In that respect, our Government and people are currently engaged in a highly participatory consultative process aimed at formulating a National Strategic Development Plan to guide Trinidad and Tobago towards becoming a developed nation by the year 2020 or earlier.

It is called Vision 2020, and its agenda includes human capital development; the evolution of a technologically driven, knowledge-based society; the development of a highly productive and globally competitive economy; and, by the year 2020, the provision for all our citizens of a standard of living comparable to that enjoyed in developed countries.

Our achievements stand in indisputable testimony to what a small, independent nation such as ours can do in that regard. There is an instructive link between two of the features that today define and distinguish our country among others in the region. One is our oil and natural gas resources — the foundation and mainstay of our economy; the other, the steelpan, our creation derived from heating and tuning the top of discarded oil drums.

The steelpan is one of the most important musical instruments invented during the last century. We are proud to have created it, and equally so of its growing international recognition and popularity, which is an apt reflection of the phenomenal ingenuity of the peoples of developing countries.

The same holds true in respect of achievements in our energy sector. At just over 130,000 barrels of oil per day, Trinidad and Tobago's production is not significant by international standards. Our natural gas production, however, stands at 2.9 billion cubic feet per day, and that has propelled my country to become today the world's largest exporter of methanol and also of ammonia. We are currently supplying 80 per cent of United States liquid natural gas imports out of our three trains, and we propose to leverage that fact towards Caribbean regional development. We are also a critical supplier of energy to our Caribbean neighbours. To further facilitate this, we are exploring the feasibility of several energy-related projects, including the establishment of a natural gas pipeline through the eastern Caribbean. We have also entered into a joint venture with neighbouring Venezuela to liquefy that country's natural gas in Trinidad and Tobago.

Meanwhile, our iron and steel production facilities are being expanded. Several new production facilities are in train, among them an ethylene production complex, an aluminium smelter project, and others for expanded ammonia and methanol production as well as other downstream petrochemical products.

The combination of an attractive and enabling investment climate, available and affordable energy, a strategic location vis-à-vis the North, Central and South American and European markets, a population literacy level of over 90 per cent, and a sound work ethic, as well as a good communications infrastructure, continue to make Trinidad and Tobago one of the largest per-capita recipients of foreign direct investment in the hemisphere. Indeed, last year we were the second-largest recipient after Canada.

Like other countries we, too, have our fair share of challenges. For example, our strategic location — less than nine miles off the South American coast and to the south of the Caribbean island chain, with excellent air and sea transport links to major North Atlantic cities — renders Trinidad and Tobago highly vulnerable to trade in illegal drugs and firearms. Combating narco-trafficking, drug-related crimes and the spread of HIV/AIDS is among our greatest challenges, but the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains resolute in its determination to eradicate those scourges. We continue to implement the measures necessary to fight them and are confident that we shall win the battle.

Our development agenda is not centred solely on the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is part and parcel of a pan-Caribbean agenda to which we are irrevocably and solidly committed, and which takes into consideration the fullest development of the countries of our region. Many historical and other ties bind our Caribbean nations and we understand that the fundamental basis for our development lies in being able to work more closely together to exert a greater influence on our own as well as global development, which for centuries have been dictated by others.

Today, our level of functional cooperation in the region has increased over a range of areas and Trinidad and Tobago continues to play a central role at all levels. We therefore look forward to the operationalization of our newest Caribbean institution, the Caribbean Court of Justice, which will serve as the arbitral body for the soon-to-be-established CARICOM Single Market and Economy, as well as the region's final appellate Court, and will be headquartered in Port of Spain.

The development of Trinidad and Tobago and CARICOM are intertwined. CARICOM is our second largest export market after the United States of America, absorbing close to 20 per cent of our exports. Our share of regional trade grew to 80 per cent in 2001. Since 1996, we have contributed approximately US$ 1.4 billion in assistance to Caribbean States through a variety of mechanisms including capital market activities, foreign direct investment, debt relief, and direct assistance. Last year we provided US$ 505 million in loans to companies and Governments in the region, some of whom have difficulty in borrowing on the international market. In addition, we have recently established a new grant facility, to be based on sales of petroleum products to the region, which will be dedicated to poverty eradication within CARICOM.

My country sees the development of the Caribbean, our second largest market, as integral to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. Even so, our national and regional development efforts require an international economic environment of greater sensitivity, one facilitating a more beneficial integration of developing countries into the world economy. In that regard, as sanguine as we are about the future of Trinidad and Tobago, I must on this occasion take a stand in the interest of the beleaguered nations of the Caribbean. How often have small independent States preached from this very mountaintop of the need for multilateral trading arrangements that take into account the inherent vulnerabilities of small island developing States, and consequently the need to be accorded special and differential treatment? There is a notable reluctance of some partner countries to respond accordingly, and that continues to have negative consequences, especially for the small economies of the Caribbean.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore stands resolute with our developing country partners in calling for what must be conceived of as the application of a social conscience within the management of globalization and its processes. As capital importing economies, the developing countries of the Caribbean are only too well aware, sometimes painfully so, of the implications of capital shortage for the generation of employment and the provision of housing, education and health care for our citizens. And perhaps I speak even for those yet unborn.

It is through softer trading arrangements, increased financial flows and the consequent empowerment of our citizens that we will be able to realize the most central of all the Millennium Development Goals, the eradication of poverty. The implications are clear. The course on which some of our European Union (EU) country partners are embarked will render the achievement of our Millennium Development Goals more difficult.

In speaking of those goals our attention is now drawn to Haiti, our newest CARICOM member, where over 1,000 people died from the onslaught of Hurricane Jeanne, further aggravating the tremendous problems that that nation already suffers. Trinidad and Tobago therefore welcomes the decision taken by the Security Council in its resolution 1542 (2004) of 30 April 2004 to establish the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We also support the recent decision by the Economic and Social Council to reactivate its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti to promote the coordination and development of a long-term programme of assistance to that country. We believe that those efforts by the international community will contribute significantly to the stability and urgently needed development of Haiti.

At this juncture, however, Haiti needs a tremendous outpouring of international humanitarian assistance. The same holds true for Grenada and several other Caribbean States whose misfortune it was to have been visited by "Ivan, the Terrible". On 8 September, Hurricane Ivan descended on Grenada. In less than two hours it had completely destroyed the economy and infrastructure of Grenada, ravaging that country beyond description. Ninety percent of the buildings on the island were damaged or destroyed. A primarily agricultural economy, dependent also on tourism, all of Grenada's crops disappeared with the strong wind. CARICOM leaders were recently advised by a Grenadian representative that today Grenada has no gross domestic product.

Before visiting Grenada, Hurricane Ivan — sowing varying amounts of disruption and destruction — visited Tobago and Barbados. After Grenada, it proceeded to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Bahamas and the southern United States. Everywhere there was considerable damage, but Grenada and the Cayman Islands were the hardest hit.

Before Ivan, there was Charley and Frances. After Ivan came Jeanne, with death and destruction for Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. A number of CARICOM countries are now saddled with the immense challenge of trying to restore normalcy.

Permit me to ask, to what extent have these obvious climate changes been influenced by incursions into space from planet Earth, or for that matter by ecological imbalances caused by industrialization?

In the aftermath of the devastation visited on Grenada, CARICOM countries have been rallying to the assistance of that island, and must be applauded for their massive outpouring of humanitarian aid that continues to flow to Grenada. In that regard, permit me to recognize and applaud the most appropriate response of the Secretary-General.

Trinidad and Tobago pledges its support to our beleaguered Caribbean neighbours, and we have thus committed ourselves through direct financial and other assistance. But what Grenada and Haiti require is well beyond the region's capacity to deliver. I urge the wider international community and donor agencies to respond adequately and to play their part. Help is needed and needed now.

The catastrophic events of the present hurricane season bring into sharper focus yet another dimension of the vulnerability of Caribbean countries. The January 2005 International Meeting in Mauritius to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action must seek to comprehensively address the new and emerging threats to the sustainable development of small island developing States. The international community should take note that a whole new set of security issues have now arisen in the Caribbean as a result of those developments.

The answer to so many of our problems lies in multilateralism, if approached the right way. Belief in and respect for multilateralism led to Trinidad and Tobago's respect for all major global and regional forums. Today, we are active participants in the creation of the free trade area of the Americas, which, when realized, will stretch from Alaska in the north to Tierra del Fuego in the south, creating a market of more than 800 million consumers and generating tremendous opportunity for economic and social development.

Our region's commitment to that hemispheric integration process has led Trinidad and Tobago and its partners in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to propose our capital city, Port-of-Spain, as the ideal location for the seat of the proposed permanent secretariat of the free trade area of the Americas.

Unanimous regional support for this CARICOM proposal would demonstrate the hemisphere's solidarity with one of its smaller members and give true meaning to the principle of the sovereign equality of all States. It would further decentralize the headquartering of major international and regional organizations and enable a small island developing State to place its resources at the service of the hemispheric community. Accordingly, we look forward to receiving the support of all our neighbours in the hemisphere.

We remain pleased with the progress of certain multilateral initiatives, including the New African Partnership for Development, which I urge CARICOM and African countries to support by exploring opportunities to develop investment, trade, tourism and regular transport routes between our region and the African continent.

We also consider the establishment of the International Criminal Court to be a major achievement, and we urge partner countries to uphold the integrity of the Rome Statute. The commission of war crimes, genocide and other such crimes against humanity has been facilitated by a global culture of impunity. The people of the world will be safe only when the perpetrators of such crimes know that punishment is inescapable.

Trinidad and Tobago condemns all forms and manifestations of terrorism, wherever and by whomever they are committed. We are already a party to the principal international legal instruments against terrorism, and the Government will shortly take parliamentary action to enact legislation honouring our obligations with respect to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

As the international community continues to confront the many threats to the survival of mankind, the world's political leadership must unequivocally reaffirm its commitment to the United Nations so that the United Nations can continue its role in fighting injustice, inequality, inequity and intolerance worldwide through resolute and speedy action, in respect of its commitment to the ideals for which it was founded.

Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that the issue of United Nations reform takes on even more urgency as the institution approaches the sixtieth anniversary of its founding in 1945. We therefore look forward to discussion of the Secretary-General's recommendations based on the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, chaired by former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun.

In conclusion, I wish to propose that on 24 October, 2005, United Nations Day, a special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly be held in San Francisco, where our Charter was signed, to reaffirm our commitment to the lofty ideals enunciated some 50 years ago, which are still valid today.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ayad Allawi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Ayad Allawi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ayad Allawi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Allawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is with pleasure that I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

It is also a pleasure to speak to the Assembly today as the Prime Minister of a fully sovereign State that seeks to recover its place among the community of nations. Iraq has been isolated from the international community for a very long time. It was deprived of the very important role it should play in the community of nations. The Iraqi people aspire to recover that role today.

Iraq is a nation rich in cultural heritage and history, as the cradle of civilization. But the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein cast a long, sinister shadow over Iraq. It traumatized and suppressed the people of Iraq for decades. With the fall of Saddam Hussein's oppressive regime, our country and the world have been made safer. New horizons for fruitful and constructive cooperation with the world have emerged.

A new situation has emerged in Iraq, which is now experiencing a conflict of far-reaching consequences for the country's future and its relations with the world. It is the struggle of the Iraqi people — and its vision for future peace and democracy — against the terrorists and extremists and the remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime, who are targeting that noble dream long nurtured by our people. It is the struggle of all civilized nations against those working to destroy civilization and world culture. I therefore appeal to the representatives of the countries assembled here to help Iraq to defeat the forces of terrorism and to build a better future for its people.

The President returned to the Chair.

The brutal dictatorship imposed by Saddam Hussein on Iraq brought destruction to Iraq and brutalized and traumatized the Iraqi people. The regime killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens. It arrested and tortured many thousands more and drove millions of Iraqis to leave their country after depriving them of the most fundamental human and civil rights. It also ruined relations among Iraqis by sowing the seeds of religious, ethnic and other divisions.

My words today cannot adequately convey the oppression and suffering endured by the Iraqi people over three decades. We have discovered 262 mass graves, and we continue to find more; they prove the corruption of the Saddam regime and its lack of compassion and respect for life.

During the brutal era of Saddam Hussein, the dream of the Iraqi people was to build a democratic, federal and free Iraq that would ensure a dignified life for its citizens. Today, we have a genuine opportunity to make that dream come true. Iraq has now become a country of laws that ensure respect for human rights and freedoms. It has a Government that embodies the diversity of the Iraqi people within the framework of genuine national unity.

Today, we are also preparing to hold democratic elections next January under the timeline set in the Law of Administration of the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period and in Security Council resolution 1546 (2004). We are committed to that timeline despite the complexities and difficulties involved, and, with the Assembly's help, we can meet the deadline. Holding elections is a vital and necessary step towards improving the security situation in Iraq. We hope that all Iraqis will participate in the elections and contribute to the completion of the political process.

Nonetheless, there is a tiny extremist minority that seeks to deprive Iraqis of the opportunity to fulfil their dream of building a democratic future in Iraq. Like all terrorists everywhere in the world, those who are responsible for terrorism in Iraq hate democracy, freedom and humanity. They are abetted in their criminal endeavours by a number of foreigners who have infiltrated Iraq from neighbouring countries. There are also criminals from the previous regime, who aim at destroying our country and impeding progress. They are not freedom fighters, as is claimed by some biased circles. They do not mean to liberate our country; rather, they want to spread chaos, violence and terror and jeopardize the security of citizens and of the country. They target the dreams and aspirations of the Iraqi people.

In fact, our goal in the ongoing conflict is to restore stability and the rule of law and to enable the men, women and children of Iraq to live free from fear. The aim of the terrorists, on the other hand, is to destroy the aspirations and will power of our people through mass killings and the destruction of Iraq's infrastructure, and to stop economic life in Iraq and create a state of tension, panic and instability in order to undermine peace and security. They want to destroy human civilization in our region and, indeed, throughout the world.

For all those reasons, my Government's top priorities are to defeat the terrorists' schemes, to establish security throughout Iraq and to hunt down the terrorists and bring them to justice. We have developed plans to promote security as a vital precondition for the reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration of economic progress, the completion of the political process, the achievement of national reconciliation and the promotion of a culture of tolerance among all citizens of Iraq.

Perhaps members now appreciate the daunting task we are facing. We look forward to assistance from our neighbours and all of our friends in the international community in order to achieve security and stability in Iraq. I recognize that some countries here objected to the war that brought down the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein and liberated the people of Iraq. And that is their right. However, differences over this issue should not remain an obstacle to establishing new cooperative relationships that would allow Iraq to receive serious international support to consolidate security, freedom and democracy in our country and to forge ahead on the path of development and progress.

Iraq welcomes international support for the objectives of the Iraqi people as outlined in Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), which was adopted unanimously. That resolution reaffirms the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and endorses the formation of the national Government. It also affirms the international community's commitment to support the Government in fulfilling the will of the Iraqi people by holding elections and establishing the proper legal framework for political parties and civil society. In addition, it places emphasis on the re-establishment of an effective governmental structure, the application of the principle of social justice, and the promotion of a climate of tolerance, dialogue and human rights.

We need more assistance from our neighbours and from the international community as a whole to meet all those objectives and to translate the aspirations of the Iraqi people into realities after so many decades of suffering under the oppression of the previous regime and its excessive practices. We are proud of our membership of the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and we have started a fruitful dialogue with the European Union. We hope that all that will lead to concrete positive results in the near future.

Also, I am pleased to announce here that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has agreed to assist Iraq in the training of its security forces. I especially welcome the upcoming conference of neighbouring countries and other friendly countries, with the objective of empowering the Iraqi people to face its challenges and dangers and of establishing stability in Iraq.

It is our duty to coordinate our efforts in the fight against terrorism and to exchange information. It is also our duty to ensure that our national borders are more secure, so that we can halt the infiltration of terrorists into Iraq and put an end to their destructive activities. In that context, we call upon all friendly and peace-loving nations to stand by Iraq; we need their immediate assistance. We need more assistance from the multinational force, and we need a broadening of the base of countries contributing troops to that force, so that it will be better equipped and more determined to confront terrorism and to provide security protection for the United Nations and its agencies when they return to Iraq.

My Government is committed to the reconstruction and development of the national economy and is working with the World Bank, the United Nations system and the International Monetary Fund to complete the reforms under way and enhance Iraq's prospects for welfare and prosperity, so that it can become effective as a trading partner of other nations. The problem of foreign debt has emerged as the most serious obstacle on that road. Our debts amount to billions of dollars, which is beyond our capacity to repay. This places an unjust burden on the Iraqi people, since those debts arose from the prohibitive costs improperly incurred by the former regime in its unjustified wars, its support for international terrorism, its acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and its plunder of our national resources.

With good intentions and rational management, Iraq hopes to reach agreement with the Paris Club by the end of this year in order to achieve substantial reductions in our debts. Here, I would like to express our gratitude to those countries that have decided to write off their loans to Iraq, and I appeal to other creditor nations to show the same generosity. Without their assistance, we will not be able to reconstruct Iraq and attract the foreign investment that would enhance our ability to defeat terrorism and improve security for the Iraqi people, ensuring increased economic benefits for the region and entire world. Also, I appeal to donor countries that have pledged generous financial assistance to fulfil their obligations in order to help us reconstruct our country. We welcome the meeting of donor countries scheduled to be convened next month in Tokyo. Such financial assistance will create an atmosphere of optimism that will allow us to leave the past totally behind and will help us finance reforms and development projects on the ground. In addition, we hope that Iraq's friends will provide financial assistance to ensure the success of our democratic elections.

We seek international assistance from the United Nations for the special Iraqi court in order to ensure that all defendants, whatever serious crimes they may be charged with, receive fair trials within the justice system. That would help Iraq free itself from the pernicious shackles of the past.

We stress that the efforts and resources committed by the international community to promote Iraq's democracy and revive its economy shall not have been committed in vain. They may even have a positive impact on the entire region and the world as a whole, creating a climate conducive to peace, security and international and regional cooperation on the basis of respect for mutual interests.

We highly appreciate the role and good offices of Secretary-General Kofi Annan in helping us lay the foundations of freedom and democracy. We also pay tribute to Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, for his work on the constitution of the interim Iraqi Government. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. Ashraf Qazi as Mr. Brahimi's successor. We further welcome the assistance team dispatched by the United Nations to help us meet our obligation to convene general elections in January.

We look forward to welcoming United Nations personnel in Iraq to help see us through an effective political process and reconstruction. We warmly look forward to the return of all United Nations agencies to fulfil their noble mission in Iraq.

On this occasion, I wish to recall with deep anguish and sorrow the destruction of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad just over a year ago in a brutal and barbaric terrorist attack that claimed the lives of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, a brilliant international figure, and of other United Nations staff members in the international compound. Their memory will remain a vivid testimony for the promotion of democracy and stability in Iraq. I stress our determination to defeat the cowardly terrorists who target the lives of foreign workers who come to Iraq to help us fulfil our noble mission.

Iraq follows closely the challenges that face the countries of the world, including the emergence of new forms of terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the need to reduce poverty, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, respect for human rights and the consolidation of democracy and equality. In that regard, Iraq appeals to the United Nations in particular to strive even harder, to combat and eradicate the horrendous scourge of terrorism. That struggle calls for new ideas and firmer resolve to implement the existing agreements. It is important that we affirm the commitment of the Government and people of Iraq to succeed in this battle.

Terrorism is a disease that is spreading throughout the world, employing misleading slogans. Terrorists have killed numerous people in the name of Islam in New York, Turkey, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bali, Madrid, Baghdad and elsewhere. They are criminals who commit their evil acts without mercy and evince only a taste for barbarism and bloodshed. Today, they have chosen Iraq as their battleground because they fear the success of the Iraqi experience and the restoration of Iraq's stability, development and democratic institution-building. They will reap nothing but failure and total defeat.

Thus, our struggle is the United Nations struggle, our victory will be its victory and our defeat will be its defeat. Indeed, the values of democracy, freedom, justice and equality for all, irrespective of gender, colour, faith or race, are common human values. There is no room or excuse for those who seek to divide our world by making a distinction of Muslims, which is extremely damaging to the unity of human society, peace and security.

Furthermore, we believe in the importance of consolidating peace and stability in the Middle East on the basis of United Nations resolutions, of respect for mutual rights and of a just and comprehensive peace.

Let me appeal today before the international community, both to those who supported the war in Iraq and to those who opposed it, as well as to the United Nations itself, not to remain neutral or idle in the struggle, but to join us for our sake as well as for their own. The fulfilment of the Iraqi people's dream of a free, stable and prosperous Iraq, with good standing in the family of peace-loving nations, will strengthen our capacity and resolve to achieve justice and peace, to defeat terrorism and violence, and to end all forms of division and hatred among nations. Let us stand side by side as one international family in order to achieve our noble cause.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime

Minister of the Republic of Iraq for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ayad Allawi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): It is a special honour for me, as a member of the new Government of Luxembourg and its Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration, to take the floor for the first time before this gathering of the nations of the world.

You, sir, have acceded to the presidency of the General Assembly at a time when decisions fraught with consequences for the future of our Organization must be prepared and discussed. Our Secretary-General has reminded us that the United Nations is at a crossroads. I have no doubt that, under your skilled and wise leadership, our General Assembly will be able effectively and decisively to provide constructive and consensual responses to the great issues of our time.

The session ahead, leading us to the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, must be one of renewal for multilateralism. I can assure you, Sir, that my country — a founding Member of the United Nations — intends to contribute actively to that crucial work, in particular within the presidency of the Council of the European Union, to which Luxembourg will accede on 1 January 2005, following the current presidency of the Netherlands. It goes without saying that I fully subscribe to the statement made by my colleague, Mr. Bernard Bot, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, before this Assembly.

From this moment until the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, three themes will be the focus of our attention: issues linked to the maintenance of peace and security; the complex question of development and its financing; and United Nations reform.

We must begin this genuine relaunching of multilateral cooperation first of all in the area of the maintenance of peace and security, basing our action on the United Nations Charter. While regional crises and civil wars have multiplied in various areas of the globe, in particular on the African continent over the past year, history has taught us, often tragically and painfully, that peace and stability can only be maintained and guaranteed within the framework of an international order based on the rule of law and shared strong and effective institutions based on fundamental shared values. This has been stated in our superb Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the subsequent normative instruments that supplemented it. This is also the lesson learned from the fratricidal horrors and conflicts of the past century between member States of the European Union, which now we are gratified to see expanded to 25 members.

In that context, we look with concern toward the Middle and Near East, where situations of tension and of open conflict seem to be worsening. Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we must emphatically recall here, given a situation characterized by numerous impasses on all sides, that the path of negotiation and compromise remains the only reasonable path and that the road map remains the only way to achieve a negotiated solution between the parties, based on the coexistence of two States, namely, an independent and viable Palestinian State, living in peace next to Israel, within secure and recognized borders. This was also vigorously reaffirmed by the Quartet the day before yesterday. In the same way, any withdrawal by Israel from the Gaza Strip must take place within the context of the political process described by the road map.

The unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) on the situation in Iraq and the subsequent restoration of Iraqi sovereignty constitute an important stage in the process of political, social and economic reconstruction of this battered country. The European Union, for its part, adopted in early September a set of measures designed to further strengthen the European commitment to Iraq. We hope that conditions will soon be such that the United Nations will be able to fully play its proper role, in particular regarding the political process, the preparation for elections, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction.

Luxembourg has also been following with the greatest attention developments in the situation in the Great Lakes region, the Western Balkans, and, in particular, in Kosovo, as well as in Darfur in Sudan. My country fully associates itself with the positions presented here by my Dutch colleague on behalf of the European Union.

The preservation of peace, crisis prevention and management and peacekeeping are among the noblest tasks of our Organization. The Security Council has an important role to play here. We should not hesitate to consider innovative solutions in defining new approaches and institutional processes to strengthen our collective capacity for prevention and action on the basis of the Charter.

Here I would like to welcome the measures taken by the Secretary-General regarding the prevention of genocide. I would venture to hope that the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will be able to put before us proposals to both improve our capacity for shared action and cope with the new threats to peace and security, among which, first and foremost, are terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. United Nations instruments in fighting terrorism were recently enhanced by the adoption of Security Council resolution 1535 (2004) and the implementation measures which flow from it. However, the recent report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al Qaeda and the Taliban and Associated Individuals and Entities reminded us that a great deal still remains to be done to put an end to these despicable and unacceptable practices which leave so many families throughout the world in mourning.

The fight against terrorism cannot be won solely through the use of military and police means. We must strike at its roots, which spawn hate, brutality and the senseless destruction of human lives. The core of any multilateral system is the right of all peoples and every human being to live in peace and dignity.

The threat of weapons of mass destruction also remains a concern of highest priority. While significant progress has been made, disturbing news has reached us over the last few months from other regions of the globe, in particular from Iran and from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In each of these cases, the necessary clarifications and full guarantees must be provided, particularly within the framework of strict respect for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regimes. Here, I would like to emphasize that the 2005 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons must provide an opportunity for reaffirming the validity and relevance of the shared quest for solutions to the complex issues of non-proliferation.

Regarding all of these cases linked to the maintenance of peace and international security, the United Nations will find a reliable and committed partner in the European Union, which has made the emergence of effective multilateralism one of its priorities for the security strategy it adopted in December 2003. It is, indeed, with pride that I add that Luxembourg has also been shouldering its peacekeeping responsibilities by contributing military contingents to the Kosovo Force and to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, which are now under the command of the European Corps.

The issue of development is and must remain the focus of the international community's attention. This is the most important point in this context. While millions of human beings continue to live in unacceptable conditions, our rallying around the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals must be constant and indeed stepped up, given the fact that many States, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, still experience extreme difficulty in making progress to meet the 2015 deadline.

For its part, Luxembourg is ready to shoulder its duties in the indispensable joint international efforts. In 2003, our official development assistance (ODA) in Luxembourg reached 0.81 per cent of our gross national product and the goal of having this figure reach one per cent in the years to come is part of the programme of the new Government that was formed in July of this year. The struggle against poverty and the commitment to sustainable development on the global level are also major objectives of the policy of cooperation in Luxembourg, the policy that we are implementing together with our partners in a spirit of partnership and participation. In our actions to ensure cooperation, particular emphasis must be placed on the continuation of international efforts targeting reproductive health, in particular, combating the horrendous scourge of HIV/AIDS.

In addition to an increase in ODA on the global scale, other sources of financing can be used, and the initiative of Presidents Lula and Chirac has charted the way for a number of interesting ideas in this respect. We believe that it is critical to maintain the Monterrey Consensus as a whole. Any effective development strategy in the medium- and long-term must be based on a proper combination of elements such as ODA, international trade, direct foreign investment and the domestic efforts of the countries involved, particularly regarding capacity reinforcement, strengthening of governance and the rule of law. In this regard, I am convinced that all efforts must be further developed to achieve a positive conclusion to the Doha development round.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration, I must mention an innovation in our national political context, as did our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on 29 January 2004, in an inciteful speech to the European Parliament in Brussels regarding the growing importance of the problem of migration, particularly for Europe. This issue must be addressed through a careful management of migration flows by focusing on integration and international cooperation. Decisive action against organized crime, in particular crime linked to any kind of trafficking in human beings, is an indispensable corollary to this.

We are called upon to step up our efforts during the year to come to prepare for a significant event, namely, the September 2005 summit, and which, in United Nations jargon, is being called the "major event". Five years after the Millennium Summit, this meeting of the highest political leaders on the planet should provide an opportunity to define a new synthesis — a new global agenda — at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Indeed, we face many significant challenges. Together, we must review all of the commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration and at the major conferences of the 1990s, assess their implementation and, within the Organization, make any adjustments and adaptations that a changing global context requires — all without compromising the level of the shared ambitions that inspire us. We must see to it that the new global agenda expresses the hopes and aspirations of the entire international community. In particular, development must continue to be a focus of the attention it deserves. There is also a need to open our Organization up to the new debates and the new issues that are emerging in the area of the maintenance of peace and security.

None of the foregoing issues are fiefdoms of a particular State or group of States. Rather, they are concerns shared by all Member States and, as such, must be managed jointly within the multilateral institutions that form our common heritage. The vitality and relevance of our Organization is the key to the effort to redefine the terms of the international agenda by giving priority to the concepts of interdependence and solidarity. While the goals are vital, the risks are significant, and, together, we must chart a coordinated, inclusive and balanced path that will allow each and every one of us to participate fully and to express our aspirations and expectations.

To achieve those lofty goals we need, first of all, to promote the development of a new mindset in our deliberations. After the divisions and controversies of recent years, the international community must once again come together and close ranks around shared, joint objectives. In that way the United Nations will remain the pre-eminent seat of international legitimacy and a vital centre for multilateral action, as the Secretary-General recently said. It is that new mindset that must inspire our shared activities as we move towards next year's major event.

We also need to agree on a procedure that will ensure the participation of all, guarantee the necessary balance among the various aspects of the process and guide us towards greater coordination on the substance of the political messages to be formulated. In all events, rest assured that my country and its partners in the European Union are ready to participate fully in that debate.

In the context of a renewal of multilateralism, as I have tried to outline it here, reform of the United Nations has pride of place. Our institutions must be better adapted to meet new challenges, as well as to fulfil their present mandates. The genuine renewal of the United Nations system must be reflected in a palpable strengthening of the tools for analysis, decision and action available to us. Effective multilateralism must be expressed through the strengthening of the United Nations system as a whole.

By adopting a more global approach, we see reform not as a zero-sum game, but as a positive-sum game, in which each player and each institution benefits from the new impetus thus provided. Significant progress was already made in the revitalization of the General Assembly during the fifty-eighth session, under the leadership of the former President, Mr. Julian Hunte. Those efforts now remain to be translated into action as well as continued and intensified.

Security Council reform, which has been in discussion for more than a decade, must be carried out, so that that vital body can better reflect the realities of today's world; indeed, it is both a prerequisite for the Council's legitimacy and a guarantee for the effectiveness of its action. More active interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly and a better coordination of their roles, as well as enhanced transparency regarding States not members of the Security Council, should form the framework of any future enlargement of the Council.

The restructuring of the work of the Economic and Social Council and the Main Committees of the General Assembly should be conducted with determination and courage so that more focused and better organized activities can gain greater relevance and have greater political impact on the substantive problems being addressed.

The strengthening of the rule of law on a global scale, as called for by the Secretary-General, and, in particular, the consolidation and ultimate universalization of the International Criminal Court, should be among our highest priorities, along with the protection of human rights — the vital importance of which I would like to emphasize once again.

Finally, I would be remiss were I to fail to mention the Secretariat staff and other United Nations personnel, who are carrying out an extraordinarily difficult mission with courage and dedication, and indeed sometimes, as we know, risking their very lives. It is crucial that we be able, within the framework of this year's budgetary discussions for the year, to provide the Organization with the resources, particularly the financial resources to fulfil the mandates that we have conferred upon it, especially in regard to peacekeeping operations. It is also vital that the Organization adopt a rigorous policy regarding the protection of United Nations personnel, who are acting on our behalf in often dangerous conditions in all corners of the globe.

It seems that to put a curse on someone, one has only to wish for them to live in interesting times. I do not know if we are living under a curse, but I do know that we are living in an interesting time: a time of debate, a time of restructuring, a time of choice and of the relaunching of international cooperation. Let us seize this opportunity and breathe new life into the United Nations, which has been proven itself to be indispensable. But let us also admit that the choice of multilateralism is a demanding one, and one that requires of us all an increased readiness to call into question our old certainties and to accept new approaches within a renewed institutional framework.

On the path towards that renewal, let us draw inspiration from the magnificent lines of the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, and I quote:

> "Traveller, your footsteps
> Are the road, and nothing else;
> Traveller, there is no road.
> The road is made by walking;
> Walking makes the road".

I am confident that together we will have the vision and the courage to take that first step, and the steps that follow, on that ambitious path.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a great pleasure to have Mr. Jean Ping presiding over the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I am confident that his wealth of experience and the friendly ties that his sisterly country enjoys with all countries of the world will be a major asset for the Assembly as it discharges its tasks.

The success of the present session will build upon the accomplishments of the fifty-eighth session under the leadership of the previous President, Mr. Julian Hunte, who made an important contribution to the revitalization of the role of the General Assembly in various fields.

I would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to enhance the status of the Organization and to strengthen its role in the international arena, in particular in the area of regional and national development.

At the outset of the fifty-ninth session we must scrutinize the international environment in which it is being held. We have to consider world events to determine their direction, to decide where we stand on them and to understand their impact, whether positive or negative, on the achievement of our shared goal: the promotion of international peace and security.

Indeed, we need to pause to see where this world and this international community are heading. Is it and are we ascending towards upholding the values of democracy, justice and the rule of law, or are we descending into tyranny, the law of the jungle and the imposition of the policies of fait accompli? Can it be said that events in the world today emanate from a genuine belief in the might of right, or do they, most regrettably, represent a consolidation of the arrogance of power?

The events witnessed by the world today are a cause of grave concern to all those who believe in the tenets and principles on which the international system was established. We are witnessing the collapse of noble values and the disintegration of principles once thought unassailable. National sovereignty and territorial integrity are no longer sufficient to prevent interference in the internal affairs of States. Indeed, those internal affairs have themselves become pretexts for those who wish to impose their policies on others.

The international situation forces us to consider the critical question of what we seek from this world and what we have offered in return. We claim that we want a world free from conflict and wars, but what have we done to create such a world? We claim that we want an international community governed by legality and the rule of law, as the Secretary-General said on Tuesday, but are we seriously upholding the values of legality and law? We claim that we wish to see all peoples enjoying democracy, but should States not practice democracy in the conduct of their foreign relations as well?

Relations among States are by nature volatile and easy to break, but they are reparable. It may be difficult at times to repair them, but the calculations pertaining to constantly changing interests will eventually make it possible to do so. Relations among peoples, however, are different. Their wounds are readily inflamed and heal slowly or hardly at all. It is therefore incumbent upon us, in our feverish attempts to achieve our own interests, to take special care to avoid flashpoints between peoples, civilizations and cultures. Their memories store all of their experiences and tribulations. Nothing stored in their collective memory fades or disappears with time.

For more than a decade now, Egypt has called and continues to call for the convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices to consider the phenomenon of terrorism and to agree on means to combat it through effective collective international efforts. Proceeding from our belief in the importance and centrality of the role of the United Nations in the coordination of international efforts to combat terrorism, as exercised through the General Assembly and the Security Council, we propose that the Assembly establish an open-ended working group to consider proposals to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations and its ability to achieve international anti-terrorism goals. That could be accompanied by the convening of regional preparatory meetings to catalogue regional needs and areas conducive to international cooperation, which could in turn ultimately lead to the adoption at an international summit of a draft comprehensive framework convention to combat terrorism.

I should like to take this opportunity to describe the situation in our part of the world and the threats and challenges it faces.

The main threat to the Middle East flows from the continued acquisition by some of nuclear weapons. While we all agree on the dangers posed by those weapons and on the need to halt their proliferation as one step towards eliminating them and freeing humanity from the threat they represent, the international community continues to address the question of weapons of mass destruction selectively. While the international community seeks to impose a strict system to monitor the imports of all Member States within the non-proliferation regime — which, incidentally, includes all Arab States — it turns a blind eye to the ongoing stockpiling of nuclear capabilities by one party in the region.

I invite all to question whether it is acceptable for the threat of nuclear proliferation to continue to loom over the Middle East. I leave it to all to decide whether the international approach to the question is fair or is one of double standards; whether it is capable of addressing those dangers and threats, or whether we are in need of urgent radical change. The ongoing application of double standards will not only exacerbate the risks of nuclear proliferation and weaken the belief in the credibility and centrality of the relevant international regime, but also aggravate the tense situation in the Middle East. In order to ease that tension and to avert those dangers, in 1990 President Mubarak launched the Egyptian initiative to create a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

In the year that has elapsed between the opening of the fifty-eighth and the fifty-ninth sessions, the suffering of the Palestinian people has continued. The Palestinian people has been subject to acts of aggression and its legitimate rights have continued to be violated. The tragedies visited upon Palestinians have become a permanent item of newscasts and newspaper headlines. A new report emerges every day of the demolition of homes, the destruction of infrastructure, the targeting of unarmed civilians, assassinations, collective punishments, and the imposition of curfews and closures. There is no end in sight to such policies. All this suffering has been met by an inexplicable international silence, with the exception of some timid expression of dissatisfaction or, at best, displeasure at events unfolding there. Such responses entrench, rather than change, the situation of fait accompli.

Israel also continues to build the separation wall on Palestinian lands. The wall separates students from their schools, workers from their factories and farmers from their fields. Had Israel's objective in the construction of the wall truly been to ensure its own security, it would have built it on its own land. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice declared the wall's construction illegal and called for a halt to construction activities and for the removal of the sections already constructed. The opinion sent a strong message to the international community in general, and to Israel in particular, to the effect that the torch of justice still burns bright. It may have seemed to flicker, but it has not been extinguished. The scales of justice still prevail. They may seem to have been upset, but they have neither fallen nor been tipped.

Our region needs the construction of bridges that connect, not walls that separate. Our region needs a channel for the hopes for a promising future, not barriers that hold the region captive to the past and its tribulations. Our region needs the serious action and sincere cooperation of all in order to dislodge the political peace process from its current impasse and put it back on track.

The way out of this bloody dilemma is well known. It was laid down by the international Quartet in the road map that enjoys the support of the entire international community. The ultimate destination of that path is also well known. It was enunciated by United States President George Bush in his vision of the establishment of two independent States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security.

That is the road before us; those are its landmarks and its goals. There is neither time for waiting nor room for foot-dragging. Prompt and effective action is needed to break the cycle of violence, to restore calm and to resume the process of political negotiations. Such negotiations are the one and only way to end the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In that regard, Israel's intended withdrawal from the Gaza Strip could be a significant step. If the withdrawal takes place in a rational, disciplined and orderly manner, it could enable us to begin to overcome the crisis and to put the peace process back on track. However, if it is carried out in an attitude of stubbornness and short-sightedness, it will lead only to tension and further violence.

In order to achieve the goal of an Israeli withdrawal, a number of elements must be ensured. In particular, the withdrawal must take place as an integral and clear part of the road map, and it must be full and complete. The withdrawal must include all crossing points, the seaport and the airport; otherwise, it will be just another way to impose a blockade on and confinement of the Palestinian people. A complete Israeli withdrawal means not only the departure of occupation forces from the Gaza Strip, but also an end to the policy of incursions, raids and assassinations, which must be followed by a withdrawal from all the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank.

Despite all the efforts and appeals for peace, the bloodshed continues unabated in the Middle East. We had pinned our hopes on the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi people at the end of June and on the formation of an Iraqi Government and National Council. It was hoped that those would be the first steps towards the restoration by the Iraqis of their full sovereignty on their own national soil and towards ending the foreign presence in that long-suffering country. However, the events of recent months and days have shown — and current events continue to show every day — that the Iraqi people continue to live in conditions that are far from stable.

We wonder whose interests are served by the events in Iraq. Who is to benefit from the destruction of that country, with its age-old civilization? Will the events taking place in Iraq remain confined to that country, or will they spread beyond its borders like fire, causing destruction and desolation in the region as they have done in Iraq?

We call upon all parties to respect Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The people and the State of Iraq desperately need a breathing space for calm reflection on the best way to bring the country out of the devastating spiral of violence. We call upon the United Nations to continue its pivotal role in helping the people of Iraq to rebuild their constitutional and legislative institutions as a first step towards the rebuilding of Iraq by the Iraqis themselves.

Moreover, there is an urgent humanitarian problem in Darfur — indeed, a real humanitarian tragedy that requires urgent international action to contain it. But is it inevitable that such an effort take the form of interference in the Sudan's internal affairs and violation of its sovereignty? Can we not provide humanitarian assistance and relief to Darfur's inhabitants without encroaching upon the Sudan's national sovereignty? Are there enough military forces in the world to be dispatched as invaders to every area that is afflicted by a humanitarian crisis?

The affairs of the Sudan, with its ethnic composition and its religious and cultural heritage, are by nature complex. It is our duty to help solve those complex and difficult problems, not to make them more so.

The Sudan has signed, with the United Nations, a framework for cooperation to solve the problem in Darfur and to ensure humanitarian access to the civilians in the region. That augurs well for the early alleviation of this humanitarian tragedy, which threatens to have dire consequences for the entire region. We call upon the international community not to confine itself to criticizing one party or another and not to lay the blame on one set of policies or another. What is more important and useful is serious action to help the Sudanese people to overcome the crisis.

Egypt believes that, in order to effectively face the challenges and threats to international peace and security, we must improve the working methods of the United Nations. Therefore, we have participated seriously — and will continue to do so — in the exercise of strengthening and revitalizing the United Nations and its organs. It is our hope that that exercise will be comprehensive, balanced and transparent and that it will be carried out in full respect for the mandates that established the various organs of the United Nations. In that context, we need to reaffirm the need to revitalize the role of the General Assembly and to ensure respect for and implementation of its resolutions by establishing an effective follow-up mechanism.

I now turn from the wider context of United Nations reform to the most sensitive reform issue: reform and expansion of the Security Council. The sensitivity of that issue clearly stems from the Council's increasing role in international affairs and its effect on many vital interests and on the international balances of power.

Here, I should like clearly to state Egypt's position, which is based on our membership in the Group of African States and the fact that we have the honour to coordinate the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) working group on this issue. Egypt hopes that the deliberations on this subject will result in both reform of the Council and expansion of its membership. The United Nations and the international community as a whole will not gain much if the process is limited to expanding the Council's membership without truly improving its working methods so that it can better represent the general membership of the Organization and have greater capacity to maintain international peace and security.

Egypt is fully committed to the Declaration of the 1997 Harare Summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which affirmed Africa's right to two permanent seats and three non-permanent seats on an expanded Security Council. We are also committed to the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement with regard to increasing the membership of the Council to at least 26 member States. Such an expansion could be confined to the non-permanent category should the expansion of both membership categories prove difficult.

What about the composition of the Council? We call for guaranteed representation of all cultures and civilizations in an expanded Security Council on the basis of the current geographical distribution in the United Nations. We believe that the Council will not be able to effectively carry out its duties in the maintenance of international peace and security unless it is more aware of the nature and circumstances prevailing in all societies and of the cultural and historical heritage on which they base and formulate their policies.

Here, we must reaffirm the legitimate right of more than 1 billion Muslims and more than 300 million Arabs to be represented in the Council on an equal footing with those who represent other cultures and civilizations. In that context, I wish to recall the significant contributions made by Egypt at the regional and international levels and its central role in the African, Arab and Islamic spheres. Also noteworthy is Egypt's role in the Middle East and among developing and emerging economies. As a founding Member of the United Nations, Egypt has made well-known contributions to the implementation of the purposes and principles of the Organization and to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Egypt also played a pivotal role in establishing the League of Arab States, the OAU, the African Union, NAM and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In addition, I wish to recall that Egypt possesses the components of a regional Power in its comprehensive sense, be it economic, military or human. Egypt also enjoys social and political stability. Its diplomatic outreach is among the largest, and over the years it has developed strong international ties throughout the world.

Egypt has in the past expressed its conviction that it is eminently qualified to assume the responsibility of a permanent seat in an expanded Security Council, on the basis of the Harare Declaration. We reiterate that the considerations to which I referred demonstrate that Egypt is clearly eligible, and has the capacity, to take on the responsibilities of membership of the Security Council, in accordance with Article 23 of the Charter. We believe that such membership could be based on a system of rotation with our African brothers, whereby we would fill the additional seats that would be allocated to our continent, in accordance with any newly established status in the Council and with the geographic distribution as would be worked out by the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jan Petersen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Petersen (Norway): When we met here in the General Assembly last year, it was against the backdrop of the terrible and devastating attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. This year we are meeting after a number of terrorist attacks, most recently the gruesome terrorist attack on children on their very first day of school in Beslan, Russia.

Terrorism is not a new threat. But the scale and brutality of recent terrorist operations have altered our lives and our thinking and forced us to take new measures to protect ourselves against this threat. Terrorism can strike anywhere and at any time. Terrorism is a threat to our security; it creates fear and want, and severely hampers economic and social development. No cause, however legitimate, can justify acts of terrorism.

The fight against terrorism must continue to be a top priority for the United Nations and the world community. We must act in accordance with international law and human rights. Democratic values and the rule of law are our strongest cards in the fight against terror.

We, the Members of the United Nations, have a responsibility to make the Organization robust enough to address the many tasks we have assigned it. The challenges are many. Unified efforts are needed to bring peace and stability to Iraq. Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) stresses that the international community must help the new Iraqi Government in its current effort to create a better future. However, functional national democracies and constitutional institutions are not created by United Nations resolutions. In Iraq, they can be created only by the Iraqis themselves. The international community and the United Nations can, and should, facilitate and assist in this process, provided that the necessary security is ensured. Our Government fully supports the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ashraf Qazi, and his team of dedicated women and men.

Afghanistan is at a critical juncture. More than 1,000 people, both Afghans and internationals, have been killed there so far this year. Reconstruction efforts and efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable are being hampered. Development activities are key elements in ensuring stability and security. Without security there will be no progress, and without progress there will be no security. There is a continued need for international security forces. The political process leading to elections is another essential requirement for stability. The United Nations must continue to play an important role.

While the world is waiting for a political solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the situation continues to worsen. The construction of the separation barrier and the expansion of settlements are serious threats to the two-State solution.

The Israeli plan to withdraw from Gaza and four settlements in the West Bank could be a step in the right direction if it is implemented in accordance with the road map and Security Council resolutions, and in keeping with the vision of a two-State solution.

A viable and well-functioning Palestinian Authority is critical to a peaceful solution to the conflict. The Palestinian leaders themselves must contribute by implementing reforms as set out in the road map. The Palestinian Authority has a clear responsibility to fight Palestinian terrorism.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for Assistance to the Palestinian People, I am encouraged by the many statements that I have heard to the effect that the international community stands ready to assist in the implementation of the planned withdrawal. However, key issues must be addressed. Most importantly, withdrawal from Gaza must be carried out in a way that is conducive to the normalization of the Palestinian economy.

Norway, together with other partners in the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, will host a donor conference before the end of the year. I appeal to the States Members of the United Nations to support the Palestinian Authority.

In Darfur we are facing another crisis, which is first and foremost a question of the safety and security of the civilian population, humanitarian access and the provision of food, medicine and shelter. The concern of the international community was expressed in Security Council resolution 1564 (2004), adopted on Saturday. All armed groups must cease the violence. The Norwegian Government expects the Sudanese authorities to fully comply with Security Council resolutions.

The Darfur crisis makes it even more important to continue the Naivasha peace process. A comprehensive peace agreement for southern Sudan will lay the foundation for a national solution to the political issues in Darfur. We welcome the decision to resume the talks between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Kenya. We urge them to work without delay to conclude a comprehensive peace agreement.

Targeting humanitarian personnel in conflict areas is absolutely unacceptable. Such acts of violence constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law. We are being forced to rethink our approach to security. It is important, however, to avoid a situation where overly strict security measures prevent the United Nations from acting effectively on the ground. Such rules might further distance the civilian population and therefore result in a loss of legitimacy and local support.

Providing security for United Nations personnel is not without costs. When we ask the United Nations to carry out difficult tasks in unsafe environments, we must also be willing to cover the expenses involved.

We look forward to the Secretary-General's recommendations on the basis of the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. That report will come at a crucial point in time for the United Nations. The United Nations needs to take earlier and more coordinated action as threats to peace and security emerge. Such action also needs to be sustained in a coordinated and effective fashion.

We agree that our collective security system needs reform. Such reform must include, among other issues, the sensitive question of Security Council enlargement. We hope that a broad set of concrete recommendations by the High-level Panel will enable us to agree on measures to better meet current and new threats and challenges. The Panel should take care to ensure that both hard and soft security issues are addressed, as well as the linkages between them. Member States have the responsibility to ensure that the Secretary-General's recommendations, based on the report of the Panel, are actively followed up.

The resolution of armed conflicts is not solely the province of the United Nations. Regional organizations also have significant contributions to make — and their capacities should be strengthened. The United Nations is indispensable in delivering legitimacy. Regional organizations, with their local knowledge, are well placed to meet challenges on the ground. Yet the institutional mechanisms for ensuring effective partnership and real burden-sharing between the United Nations and regional organizations are not in place. This situation must be rectified.

A case in point is the involvement of the African Union (AU) in Sudan. Norway welcomes the response to the Darfur crisis by the AU and its member States. The AU mission must be enhanced both by becoming more pro-active and by increasing the number of participants. Norway has supported the AU and the United Nations in providing security and humanitarian relief in Darfur. We stand ready to continue to support those efforts.

I believe that strengthening Africa's capacity for peacekeeping and peace-building is essential if we are to deal with the challenges that United Nations peacekeeping is facing. For nearly ten years, Norway has contributed to peacekeeping through our Training for Peace in Southern Africa Programme. We plan to expand that programme to West Africa.

It is uplifting to see the progress being made in many African countries. We applaud the basic principles and political priorities being addressed by the New Partnership for Africa's Development and welcome last week's inauguration of the Pan-African Parliament. This strengthening of the political dimension of regional cooperation testifies to the dedication of African leaders and holds promise of an even more active and efficient role for the AU in the years to come.

Without economic growth there will be no improvement in welfare and wealth distribution, and little hope of peace and security. International trade may be an important engine for creating growth and welfare. However, this will not happen by itself. A sound basis for growth and welfare that benefits all countries can be created only by means of fair trade rules developed through international cooperation. In this respect, the World Trade Organization framework agreement reached in Geneva in July is a milestone. We avoided any deadlock or setback, and now we can renew our efforts to achieve substantial progress on the Doha Development Agenda. I noted that in his speech, President Lula da Silva said that "If successful, the Doha Round could lift more than 500 million people out of poverty". This certainly shows the opportunities of globalization. However, ensuring that economic growth actually improves the livelihoods of ordinary people requires adequate domestic policies.

In an ever more globalized world, we need forums to develop the international guidelines necessary to facilitate cooperation. However, we all need to do our part. It has been 10 years since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change entered into force. More than 120 countries have ratified the Kyoto Protocol, and we are now awaiting the ratification that will allow it to enter into force. I welcome the news that Russia is seriously considering the ratification of the Protocol, but I regret that some countries have not yet been willing to join forces in facing one of the most serious global challenges of our time.

Fulfilling the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol is a first step towards coming to grips with the challenge of climate change. The entire international community, and notably the largest emitters, must make a much more ambitious commitment in this field; we have no time to lose. In the Arctic region we are already experiencing the effects of climate change as seen in a temperature rise that is substantially greater than the global average.

Next year we will take stock of developments since the Millennium Declaration was adopted. This is an opportunity to review progress and, where necessary, intensify efforts to fulfil our commitment to reducing poverty and achieving development. True gender equality and education for all stand out as crucial in this regard. The Summit in 2005 should also focus on international efforts to promote peace-building, reconciliation, global security and respect for human rights. We must take decisive steps during the next General Assembly to meet development targets and create a safer and more peaceful world.

The United Nations is indispensable as our most universal and representative organization. Norway has devoted a great deal of effort to building the multilateral system. We are proud of our political and financial contributions to the United Nations system. We are eager to see the United Nations strengthened and reshaped, so that it can remain our most important instrument for addressing global challenges. Norway remains committed to supporting the United Nations in meeting those challenges.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ernst Walch, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Walch (Liechtenstein): The United Nations faces unprecedented challenges: the recent past has brought about a worrisome erosion in the standing and credibility that this great Organization has enjoyed worldwide. Use of military force without prior authorization by the Security Council and increasingly difficult and dangerous conditions under which United Nations personnel operate in many places are but two examples illustrating this trend.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has given a two-tiered response. First, he issued a call for an unequivocal commitment to the principle of multilateralism, upon which this Organization is built. And secondly, he commissioned a report from eminent and highly experienced personalities on how the Organization should address new threats and challenges.

Liechtenstein believes that this was the right response. An unequivocal and unwavering commitment from all of us is the basis for collective action and for observing the rules we have set for ourselves. Only this commitment can give meaning to our decisions to tackle new challenges, and only this can enable us to further develop a rules-based framework in order to look confidently into the future.

We must acknowledge the fact that the challenges we are facing today were not foreseeable when the founding fathers agreed on the terms which guide the work of this Organization. At the same time, we must always recognize the Charter of the United Nations as the unique achievement that it is and examine our current ways of applying this great tool that was passed down to us. It is therefore our obligation to conduct an in-depth and sober analysis of these new challenges in order to make an informed decision about how best to address them within the framework of the United Nations system. Changes and creative approaches will be needed.

We therefore very much look forward to receiving and considering the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change established by the Secretary-General. But however insightful their findings and however visionary their recommendations may be — and we have high hopes that they will be — the necessary decisions to expand the existing multilateral architecture will have to be made by us, the States gathered in this Assembly on the threshold of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. Not in 10 years. Now. The time is right.

In a globalized world, collective action is the necessary response to a great number of challenges. Effective measures in numerous areas — the environment, HIV/AIDS, poverty-reduction, the fight against terrorism, to name but a few — can only be taken on the basis of genuine and efficient global cooperation. Such cooperation can only be successful if it is based on a set of transparent and clear rules applied in the same manner to everybody who participates in it. International law is clearly the primary instrument in this respect. However, we have witnessed contradictory tendencies in the area of international law, especially in the recent past.

On the positive side, there have been landmark achievements, most notably the establishment of the International Criminal Court. For the first time in the history of mankind, there is an independent Court, based on a Statute negotiated by the international community at a diplomatic conference, that has the competence to try individuals responsible for the worst crimes when States themselves fail to do so. We are sadly reminded every day how much such an institution is needed. On the negative side, we have observed a dangerous erosion in the application of long-standing international law standards, most notably in the field of international human rights and international humanitarian law. The stage we have reached is critical and there can be only one response: We must urgently reverse this trend and uphold the primacy of the rule of law, both nationally and internationally.

We firmly believe that the rule of law is an indispensable element of sound domestic policies — often referred to as good governance — and an indispensable part of sustainable development worldwide. International organizations, including the United Nations, are called upon to continue their efforts to assist States in establishing and applying the rule of law. We strongly support the efforts made over the past year to strengthen the role of the United Nations in that respect.

The rule of law at the domestic level must be complemented at the international level through full and unconditional respect for internationally recognized standards and transparent and fair rules in international decision-making. We have been very slow in dealing with the changes in the world and its consequences, most notably with regard to non-State actors who fall outside the framework of international law as we have known it in the past. We must ensure that all those individuals and groups that play a significant role in the international arena are not allowed to move in a legal vacuum and we must clarify which rules apply to them. That, however, we can do credibly and thus effectively only if we, the Governments representing States, continue to respect the standards we have created for ourselves.

The one body that is particularly called upon in that respect is the Security Council — to many, the epitome of the United Nations as a whole. The Council must meticulously observe the mandate given to it under the Charter and ensure transparency and clarity in its decision-making. That is of special importance where the Council's decisions directly affect the rights and obligations of individuals who are not entitled to individual legal remedies — a situation which can be difficult to reconcile with the rule of law.

A strong momentum is gathering for reform of the Security Council after more than 10 years of deliberations on that very complex topic. In light of the challenges before the Council and the open questions concerning its role, in particular with regard to increasing legislative activities, successful reform must address all aspects. Enlargement to make that body more modern and representative is one such aspect. We believe that it is not sound for a universal Organization to have its major decisions in a truly vital area taken by only a handful of States.

Furthermore, the working methods of the Council, its accountability to the membership as a whole and its mandate must also be addressed. Liechtenstein, and its delegation in New York in particular, will continue to stand ready to make their contribution to that end.

In accordance with the Charter, the Council acts on behalf of the entire membership in carrying out its duties, and its decisions are binding on all Member States. All States should therefore take a strong interest in its work and make use of their opportunities to interact with and express their views to the Council, whether they are members or not. More openness and inclusiveness in the Security Council are still both desirable and feasible. The question remains, however: Is the Security Council too powerful or do we simply lack the necessary system of checks and balances? We support a dynamic and strong Security Council and therefore tend to the latter view, with a clear focus on an enhanced role for the General Assembly, the only universal organ of the United Nations. The measures on revitalization upon which we were able to agree during the last session show us how far we still have to go. It must be our goal to make this Assembly an efficient and effective body that can act and react quickly and with resolve.

We are still very far away from that goal. The momentum gathered over the past year must be translated into further, bold measures and trigger a process that is not reversible. This is no time for complacency and no time for indifference. This Assembly has historical tasks before it. We must leave lethargy and short-term national interests behind in the interest of the greater good. Secretary-General Kofi Annan put it very aptly in his speech this past Tuesday: If we cannot reach agreement on the way forward, history will make the decisions for us. We must set a vision for the future and live up to our responsibility. We owe this to all future generations and to ourselves.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Julian Robert Hunte, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Hunte (Saint Lucia): Saint Lucia supported your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, Sir, as it shares the view of Member States that you will provide important leadership to this General Assembly. I extend sincere congratulations to you and to the Government and people of your country, Gabon, on behalf of the delegation of Saint Lucia, and on my own behalf, and pledge to work cooperatively with you in our common endeavour.

There is a personal note to my pledge of support and cooperation. Just one year ago, this Assembly honoured my country and me by entrusting the leadership of the fifty-eighth session of this body to me. I am fully aware, therefore, of the tremendous responsibility that falls to you as President, and OF the demands and pressures of leadership of this, the United Nations sole universal organ. In a relay of leadership that began some 59 years ago, I have passed the baton to you, assured that this will be a productive and successful fifty-ninth session.

My year as President of the General Assembly gave me a keener appreciation of the myriad tasks which the Secretary-General performs in the service of, and to inspire confidence in, the United Nations. The Government and people of Saint Lucia support him in his continuing contribution to our efforts to address the critical issues facing our Organization and our world.

The picture of our twenty-first century world is far different from that envisaged in the United Nations Charter. Instead of a world of peace, security and economic and social progress, in which human rights, fundamental freedoms and international law are fully respected, today our world is buffeted by poverty; hunger; the spread of endemic disease, including HIV/AIDS; conflicts; war; terrorism, and other grave problems.

This is so despite the combined effort of the United Nations system and the enormous potential of the Organization to live up to the ideals, principles and purposes of the Charter.

The United Nations is passing through a period of intense questioning and doubts as to its capacity and relevance. It is the view of my Government that many of the doubts and questions stem from the continuing challenge posed to the Organization to transform the ideals of the Charter into action. Those questions and doubts have been intensified by the concern that some of the Organization's most influential and powerful Member States might turn away from multilateralism — the very foundation of the United Nations — and follow the path of unilateral action.

We can and we must, stop our unique and indispensable Organization from being battered by the tides of these turbulent times. We must better enable it to address the myriad problems with which peoples and nations are grappling. And we must reaffirm its status as the world's foremost multilateral organization. But we can only do so through our full commitment and resolve to ensure that the Organization and its Member States live up to the ideals of the Charter.

We know that the Charter charges the United Nations to achieve the solution of economic problems cooperatively. That puts the Organization on the front line of what, for many States, particularly those in the developing world, appears to be a very long road to sustainable development. Nowadays, it is a road constructed primarily around globalization and trade liberalization, which have mostly delivered on their promises of economic advancement to developed countries, but have yet to deliver on those promises to many others, mostly developing countries.

It cannot be disputed that current inconsistencies and inequities in the global trading system are widening the gap between rich and poor, haves and have-nots. It is not surprising, therefore, that developing countries, particularly in the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), are asserting that globalization and trade liberalization should not undercut their sustainable development prospects, and that there ought to be a fair and equitable global trading system.

Agricultural subsidies, market access, non-tariff barriers to trade, low or falling commodity prices and special and differential treatment — all those issues beg for constructive dialogue and decisive action, particularly in the interest of the developing world. Specific mandates for trade and development issues may reside in other organizations, including the WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. But the United Nations has a leading role to play in bringing coherence — here I underscore the word coherence — to debate and policy-setting on those issues, in line with its Charter mandates. Its efforts in that area have the full support of my Government.

The spate of deadly hurricanes that continue to traverse the Caribbean region, have brought sharply into focus the issues on which small island developing States (SIDS), including Saint Lucia, have urged the United Nations and the international community to act. We have reiterated, for example, that SIDS are vulnerable and that special and differential treatment, fair prices for commodities and development financing are essential to their sustainable development.

In just a few short weeks, hurricanes have brought death and destruction throughout the Caribbean region, and, indeed, also to the Bahamas and the United States. There was tragic loss of life in our sister Caribbean countries and territories — 37 in Grenada, 20 in Jamaica; and even now, Haiti is still counting the cost in lives lost. Property and infrastructural damage was immense, particularly in Grenada. Hurricane "Ivan the terrible" destroyed 90 per cent of that country's physical infrastructure. I say to this Assembly that when a small island developing State loses 90 per cent of its physical infrastructure in the space of a few hours, the challenge to that country is formidable.

For Grenada, it is like starting over. Grenada must rebuild its infrastructure, economy, communications systems, hospitals and schools, everything from the ground up to restore the quality of life for its people. But how, and with what resources will it rebuild? The member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have made a commitment to Grenada, but can only assist to the extent that their means allow. Given their own resource constraints, how far can that assistance be expected to go? The Government and people of Grenada and of CARICOM are highly appreciative of the condolences expressed in this Hall, and for offers of assistance. But Grenada needs much more. The Government of Saint Lucia calls upon the international community to make a commitment, as a matter of urgency, to the reconstruction of Grenada. We urge the convening, at an early date, of an international donor conference for the purpose of mobilizing the resources required for the reconstruction effort.

In keeping with the international commitment to promote the sustainable development of SIDS, Saint Lucia calls upon the development partners and the international donor community to work together with SIDS to address their vulnerability and other critical issues frontally. The International Meeting for the 10-Year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be convened in Mauritius in January 2005, gives everyone yet another opportunity to do so. Saint Lucia urges all States, developed and developing, and particularly partners and donors, to be represented at the International Meeting at the highest level. In particular, we urge that commitments to provide resources for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, are kept.

Indeed, this fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly will be a pivotal one in respect of commitments made internationally, including those made in the critical area of HIV/AIDS. The session is also crucial to positioning us for the 2005 comprehensive review of commitments made in furthering the United Nations development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals. Even as we prepare for the High-level Plenary that will examine the successes and failures in implementing the outcomes of more than a decade of United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, the disjuncture between what we have agreed and what we have done in the interest of the peoples of the world becomes self-evident.

We must ask ourselves why it is that we continue to fail the poor, the hungry, the sick and the disenfranchised among us, despite the numerous specialized, high-level meetings we have convened to address their condition? And why is it that we appear incapable of meaningful action beyond the boundaries of those meetings? If we cannot bring relief to the vast numbers of marginalized and disadvantaged among us, if we cannot advance growth and development, particularly for developing countries, we can rest assured that we will lose, or continue to lose, the confidence of the people of the world. There is therefore one message we must take into the 2005 high-level event: agreement on outcomes is meaningless if it is not followed by practical and effective implementation. We must act to implement and we must act now.

It is asserted that peace and security are not possible without development and that development is not possible without peace and security. Saint Lucia agrees with this point; both are central to the purposes and principles of the Charter. We must, however, remain vigilant that our development agenda is not eclipsed by a single-minded focus on conflict and war, which continue to cast a giant and deadly shadow over our world.

The function given to the United Nations — and particularly to the Security Council — for the maintenance of international peace and security is an exceptional one. How effectively the Organization carries out that function is an important determinant of its standing in the eyes of the people who need it most and of world public opinion. Therefore, we must be consistent in our global strategy for world peace and security. Importantly, the United Nations must not be seen as an Organization so mesmerized by crises that it is slow to act decisively to address critical issues of life and death. The action we take, after all, should present our best hope for a more peaceful and more secure world.

We know that conflict and war have costs that are incalculable, particularly in human lives, and can have no happy ending. Today, Iraq remains an unsettled, fractured country. The United Nations has a responsibility to the people of Iraq to work with them to restore peace, security and prosperity to their country. In this, the Organization must ultimately take its lead from the people of Iraq; it is only they who can devise uniquely Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems and determine the kind of future to which they are committed.

Regarding another crisis, my Government is disappointed that the road map to peace in the Middle East appears to have been put aside, and hopes that new initiatives will be undertaken urgently towards settling that long-standing situation, which continues to cause so much grief.

Every day, news stories and commentaries in the media remind us of the level of violence and perils in our world. The complex and uncertain threat of terrorists and terrorism constitutes a critical factor contributing to the rising tide of violence, death and destruction. Recently, terrorism became a reality for hundreds of victims in the Russian Federation. My Government extends its sympathy to the Government of Russia and to all victims of terrorism and their families worldwide. Even with our best efforts, it is not always possible to know where or when terrorists will strike again, nor can we say with any certainty that current efforts against terrorism have made the world a less dangerous place.

We can say, however, that the root causes of terrorism are symptomatic of problems, some seemingly intractable, around the globe; that terrorism is global in its impact; and that its solution must be global. In addressing the problem of terrorism, we must also look to dealing with the hunger, poverty and inequities spoken of by President Lula da Silva of Brazil and many other concerned leaders, which are giving rise to the hopelessness and despair being experienced by millions and millions of people all over the world. Greater efforts must be made to resolve those critical problems.

As we survey the enormity of the challenges the United Nations and the global community face today, we must ask ourselves: Is our 59-year old Organization equipped to confront those challenges? There is a current of reform within the Organization. A series of progressive steps were taken during the fifty-eighth session, in particular, to advance revitalization of this Assembly. However, the Assembly still has to demonstrate its ability to reconcile the interests of its member States and to take action to implement the hard choices which revitalization of this important universal forum requires. We must ensure that the gains made are not reversed.

During the fifty-eighth session, the debate was also opened on Security Council reform, and some progress was made to lift this matter out of its moribund state. The Security Council must indeed be reformed, so that its actions can carry more weight and acceptance internationally. The Council must be expanded to make it more representative of the generality of the membership, and a way must be found to address the serious concerns surrounding the veto privilege. Recent reform initiatives should impact processes under way and practical recommendations aimed at ensuring that the Security Council is adequate to its mandates, including those that might be taken up at the 2005 high-level plenary meeting.

Since the establishment of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and civil society have worked constructively with this Organization to address pressing global problems. We now have a report on how the relationship might be made more beneficial. It is our hope that the Assembly will carefully consider this matter, as the support of non-governmental organizations and civil society is too important to be taken for granted.

The Government and people of Saint Lucia believe that confidence in the United Nations is being restored. We believe that the world's people expect the Organization to take a leading role in resolving their most pressing problems. We believe that the United Nations can be many things to many people. The Organization has been sorely challenged in recent years, but has shown resolve in rising to the challenge. With an abundance of political will, the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter can triumph. The Government and people of Saint Lucia are inspired by that prospect.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kassymzhomart Tokaev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Tokaev (Kazakhstan): First of all, Sir, let me add my voice to the congratulations on your election to the high office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and express confidence that, under your leadership, it will be successful and fruitful.

I would like to begin by supporting the statement of Secretary-General Kofi Annan concerning the crucial importance of fostering the rule of law, both at home and in the framework of international relations, for the solution of the topical issues of the modern world.

Today, the whole system of international relations is under vicious attack. We are witnessing the growing reach and brutality of international terrorism and organized crime, the alarming degradation of our environment and the spread of poverty, misery and disease.

Every year, we keep repeating that the challenges and threats to humanity have become global and that the international community should make joint efforts to address these challenges effectively and with determination. But, with our words still resonating in the air, these problems continue to place a heavy burden on human beings.

For years, the international community has been ignoring the most burning problems of social and economic development and has failed to address poverty, misery, illiteracy and various forms of discrimination. As a result, we are faced with an unprecedented threat of international terrorism, which undermines the pillars of the world economy and security. Nevertheless, we have not yet done anything meaningful to get a detailed analysis of the ideology behind international terrorism, its institutional base and its sources of financing. In other words, the central nature of international terrorism remains *terra incognita* for all of us; we are familiar only with its ugly manifestations.

Recent alarming developments in the world, especially the massacre in Beslan, have again highlighted the urgent need to reform the United Nations. We cannot meet new challenges and address today's acute problems if we continue to rely on old approaches. The central issue of international security is turning the United Nations into an effective tool designed to strengthen regional and global security systems, the regime of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and management of globalization processes.

As a matter of principle, we consider it important to ensure balance in the functioning of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as envisioned in the Charter of this Organization. We insist on the need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly in the settlement of the most important issues facing humanity today. In our view, the international community's efforts to combat terrorism and to settle armed conflicts can be more effective only on the basis of such an approach.

Kazakhstan has supported the Secretary-General's decision to establish a high-level panel on United Nations reform. We believe that this panel, with its broad mandate and wide-ranging powers, should arrive at an acceptable solution to this present crucial issue. Kazakhstan holds the view that, in its current form, the Security Council no longer reflects the realities of our world. I share the opinion of the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, that the "enemy State" clauses in the United Nations Charter are obsolete. The Security Council should be revitalized by the addition of new permanent and non-permanent members. Asia, Africa and Latin America should have a wider representation in the Security Council and should be directly involved in the search for solutions to the important problems facing the international community.

Kazakhstan calls for the establishment of a council of regional organizations under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General. Close attention should be paid to the proposal to establish an economic and social security council. We believe that these proposals reflect the need to strengthen global multilateral cooperation.

Our country continues to believe that the United Nations is the only genuinely universal international organization responsible for the issues of war and peace, acting as a guarantor of international law.

It is encouraging that the reform of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee is gaining momentum. With the current escalation of international terrorism, the role of this Committee should become more important; otherwise, global counter-terrorism efforts to address new challenges and threats will not be so effective, and this runs counter to the wishes of the peoples of the world.

Mr. Belkhadem (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Our country supports the United Nations peacekeeping effort and the continued strengthening of its capacity in this area. With escalating humanitarian crises and armed conflicts, as effectively demonstrated by the developments in Darfur, the United Nations should pay special attention to the possibility of broader participation by authoritative regional and subregional organizations in peacekeeping operations, which would allow a more effective and timely response to emerging threats.

Yet, one key issue is the prevention of conflicts and crises. For this reason, Kazakhstan is a firm supporter of preventive diplomacy and continues to believe that the establishment of a Central Asian preventive diplomacy centre is a timely initiative.

In our view, there is an urgent need to coordinate the efforts of the entire international community in the area of disarmament and arms control. We call for an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and urge the Governments of those States that have not yet ratified this instrument to display political will and genuine commitment to nuclear disarmament.

As one of the few States that have voluntarily given up their nuclear weapons, Kazakhstan is concerned by the current status of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This important treaty has been seriously eroded because of destructive actions on the part of a number of known States. We should recognize that the non-proliferation regime faces a formidable threat, and there is a real possibility of an uncontrolled spread of weapons of mass destruction and, most important, of terrorists getting hold of them. In view of this, we consider the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia to be a very important and timely proposal.

We believe that the negotiation process within the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva should be reactivated. In our view, the potential of this important forum is far from being tapped to its full extent.

The Government of Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the consistent implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, as discussed at a regional conference in Almaty in March of 2004.

For us, it is very important that the Iraqi issue is again in the political realm of the United Nations. Emphasizing the need to ensure the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, Kazakhstan welcomes the transfer of authority and responsibility for the administration of the country to the Interim Government of Iraq and calls on the Iraqi people to come together in the name of national unity and conciliation.

The participation of a unit of the armed forces of Kazakhstan in the multinational force in Iraq is a demonstration of our country's commitment to the implementation of its obligations towards the maintenance of international peace and security.

Continued instability in the Middle East is a matter of grave concern to Kazakhstan. From our point of view, the resumption and advancement of the peace process, on all tracks, and the implementation by all parties to the conflict in the Middle East of their commitments, as reflected in the road map and relevant Security Council resolutions, should remain the main goal of all those concerned.

Kazakhstan supports the efforts of the current Government in Afghanistan to consolidate peace and security in the country and address social, economic and humanitarian issues. We expect that the international community, starting with all the developed countries, will live up to their commitments with regard to the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. As for our country, we are ready to contribute to the process, within our means.

We believe that the well-being of the Central Asian region is largely dependent on the normalization of the situation in Afghanistan. We have every reason to be concerned by such problems as the increasing spread of drugs, illegal migration and surging religious extremism. Together with poverty, ecological degradation and the lack of water resources, these phenomena provide a breeding ground for international terrorism, which is gaining force in our region.

In view of that, Kazakhstan supports the activities of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime in Central Asia, particularly the adoption of a regional plan of action to control the illicit spread of drugs in the States neighbouring Afghanistan and the establishment of a security belt around that country. We believe that the deployment in Afghanistan — under the auspices of NATO — of the International Security Assistance Force is an important factor in the restoration of peace and security in the country.

Kazakhstan's initiative regarding the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) — already a fact of international life — is an effective tool designed to strengthen confidence and security in Asia. The first CICA summit, held in June of 2002, became a milestone in that process and paved the way for practical efforts to institutionalize the Conference.

The draft catalogue of confidence-building measures and the draft rules of procedure have already been agreed and are expected to be adopted at a ministerial meeting of the CICA countries, scheduled to be held in October 2004 in Almaty. The adoption of the catalogue will create a unique document encompassing a range of measures in the military, political, economic, cultural and environmental areas designed to strengthen security and confidence in Asia.

As a newly independent State, Kazakhstan wants to contribute to global harmony and stability. The fact that our multi-ethnic State enjoys a large degree of inter-confessional and inter-ethnic accord says a lot; first of all, it is a confirmation that Kazakhstan has become an integral part of the civilized community. We categorically reject the concept of the clash of civilizations and consider it to be counterproductive and harmful, because it serves as a justification for international conflicts and the barbaric actions of international terrorists.

Kazakhstan firmly believes that dialogue and harmony among civilizations are not only possible but also necessary. For that reason, our head of State initiated a congress of world religions, held in Astana in September of 2003. The success of that forum has strengthened our conviction that it is absolutely essential to establish a dialogue and ensure peaceful coexistence between religions and civilizations, in the interests of peace and global security.

Kazakhstan reaffirms its strong commitment to integration and multilateral cooperation at the regional level. This approach, which promotes the sustainable social and economic development of Kazakhstan, is fully within our long-term interests. Such institutions as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Organization of Central Asian Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organization play an ever-increasing role in the efforts to strengthen security, develop economic cooperation and create conditions for the prosperity of our large region.

We have great expectations regarding integration within the framework of the single economic space made up of the territories of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine. Our country also supports the strengthening of the capacity of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as a major and influential international organization. Recently, President Nursultan Nazarbaev has made concrete proposals concerning the reform of the Commonwealth.

Kazakhstan reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of its obligations towards the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and hopes that the upcoming ministerial meeting in Sofia will develop new approaches to the reform of that organization in order to adapt it to new challenges emerging from our region. We also commend the results of the cooperation with NATO within the framework of its Partnership for Peace programme and consider the possibility of increasing the level of our cooperation with that alliance.

Kazakhstan continues to pay priority attention to the development of its cooperation with Russia, the United States, China, the countries of Central Asia, the European Union and the Asian and Islamic countries. We are now in a position to claim considerable progress in that area, which has allowed us to create favourable external conditions for liberal reforms in the country. Having been given the status of a market economy and enjoying a high rating in the financial community, Kazakhstan has been recognized by the international community as a leader among the post-Soviet States in practically all economic indicators, including direct foreign investments.

We welcome the start of a direct dialogue between the Central Asian States and Japan and consider that form of cooperation to be very meaningful and promising. We also attach great importance to the partnership between our region and the United States in order to create a zone of free trade.

The Almaty Programme of Action, adopted by the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in August of 2003 in my country, has provided to the landlocked Central Asian States an important tool for the solution of their trade and transit problems. We hope that the needs of inland States will be duly taken into account in trade negotiations in order to provide appropriate privileges and preferences to that group of countries.

It is a well-established fact that the transportation policies of many countries, including Kazakhstan, are closely linked to the delivery of hydrocarbons to world markets. As a country with the potential to become a major world exporter of oil and gas, Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the determination of the legal status of the Caspian Sea and to the signing of a convention on that issue. An agreement by the littoral States on the use of the Caspian Sea exclusively for peaceful purposes has become an important accomplishment in the negotiation process. Kazakhstan holds the view that it is necessary to continue intensive efforts in a five-party format, gradually overcoming existing differences in the search for solutions that would agree with the fundamental principles of international law and promote the final determination of the legal status of the Caspian Sea.

Kazakhstan is gravely concerned by the fate of another sea — the Aral Sea. The continued degradation of the environment of the region seriously affects the health and livelihood of the population. The situation in the Aral Sea region has acquired global dimensions; the salt from its seabed has long been present in the air in Europe and Asia, and even over the North Pole. Yet the international community, unfortunately, is not fully aware of the grave ramifications of this environmental disaster. Technical assistance and financial aid to the population of that long-suffering region have been sporadic. We believe that a special General Assembly resolution on the Aral Sea has long been overdue.

We also urge the international community to reactivate fruitful cooperation in the solution of social and economic problems facing the population around the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground. The people of the region were the unwitting victims of some 500 nuclear-weapons tests conducted in the heat of the global arms race. We are grateful to the Governments of Japan, the United States and other donor States for the due attention being paid by them to this screaming problem, yet we believe that, in this particular case, multilateral cooperation would have been more effective. The framework for such cooperation is already in place in the form of a relevant General Assembly resolution, whose potential has not been used to the full.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Kazakhstan will continue to exert every effort to strengthen global and regional stability, fight terrorism and meet other challenges that we face today.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Every year at the United Nations, we go through the same ritual. We attend the general debate knowing beforehand that the clamour for justice and peace by our underdeveloped countries will be ignored once again. However, we persist. We know that we are right. We know that one day we will accomplish social justice and development. We also know that such assets will not be given away to us. We know that the peoples will have to seize them from those who deny us justice today, because they underpin their wealth and arrogance with disdain for our grief. It will not be always like that, however. We say so today with more conviction than ever before.

Having said this, and knowing as we do that some powerful ones — just a few — present here will be chagrined, and also knowing that they are shared by many, Cuba will now tell some truths.

First, after the aggression on Iraq, there is no United Nations, understood as a useful and diverse forum based on respect for the rights of all and with guarantees for the small States. It is experiencing the worst moment of its nearly 60 years. It languishes, it gasps for air, it keeps up appearances, but it does not work. Who handcuffed the United Nations, named by President Roosevelt? President Bush.

Second, United States troops will have to be withdrawn from Iraq. Now that the lives of over 1,000 American youths have been uselessly sacrificed to serve the spurious interests of a clique of cronies and buddies, and following the deaths of more than 12,000 Iraqis, it is clear that the only way out for the occupier faced with a people in revolt is to recognize the impossibility of subduing them and to withdraw. In spite of the imperial monopoly over information, peoples always get to the truth. Someday, those responsible and their accomplices will have to deal with the consequences of their actions in the face of history and their own peoples.

Third, for the time being, there will be no valid, real and useful reform of the United Nations. It would take the super-Power, which inherited the immense prerogative of governing an order conceived for a bipolar world, to relinquish its privileges. And it will not do so.

As of now, we know that the anachronistic privilege of the veto will remain; that the Security Council will not be democratized as it should be or expanded to include third world countries; that the General Assembly will continue to stand ignored; and that, at the United Nations, there will be more actions driven by the interests imposed by the super-Power and its allies. We, as non-aligned countries, will have to entrench ourselves in defending the United Nations Charter, because if we do not it will be redrafted with the deletion of every trace of such principles as the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and the non-use or the threat of use of force.

Fourth, the powerful collude to divide us. The 130-plus underdeveloped countries must build a common front for the defence of the sacred interests of our peoples and of our right to development and peace. Let us revitalize the Non-Aligned Movement. Let us strengthen the Group of 77.

Fifth, the modest objectives of the Millennium Declaration will not be accomplished. We will reach the fifth anniversary of the Summit in a situation that has worsened. We sought to halve by 2015 the 1.276 billion human beings in abject poverty that existed in 1990. There would have to be a yearly reduction of more than 46 million poor people. However, excluding China, between 1990 and 2000, extreme poverty rose by 28 million people. Poverty does not decline, it grows.

We wanted to reduce by half by 2015 the 842 million hungry people in the world. There would have had to be a yearly reduction of 28 million. However, there has been a reduction of barely 2.1 million hungry people per year. At this rate, the goal will be attained by 2215, two hundred years after what was envisaged, and only if our species survives the destruction of its environment.

We proclaimed the aspiration to achieve universal primary education by 2015. However, more than 120 million children — or 1 in every 5 children of school age — do not attend primary school. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), at the current rate, the goal will be achieved after 2100.

We also proposed to reduce by two thirds the mortality rate in children under the age of five. The reduction has been symbolic: whereas 86 children died per 1,000 live births in 1998, the figure is now 82. Every year, 11 million children continue to die of diseases that can be prevented or cured, and their parents rightfully wonder what our meetings are for.

We said that we would pay attention to Africa's special needs. However, very little has been done. African nations do not need foreign advice or models, but rather financial resources and access to markets and technologies. Assisting Africa would not be an act of charity, but an act of justice, a settling of the historic debt resulting from centuries of exploitation and pillage.

We committed ourselves to halting and starting to reverse the AIDS epidemic by 2015. However, in 2003, it claimed nearly 3 million lives. At this rate, some 36 million people will have died of this disease by 2015.

Sixth, creditor countries and the international financial agencies will not seek a just and lasting solution to foreign debt. They prefer to keep us in debt — in other words, vulnerable. Therefore, even though we have paid off $4.1 trillion in debt servicing over the last 13 years, our debt has increased from $1.4 trillion to $2.6 trillion. This means that we have paid three times what we owed and now our debt is twice as large.

Seventh, we, the underdeveloped countries, are the ones that finance the wastefulness and the opulence of developed countries. While in 2003 they gave us $68.4 billion in official development assistance (ODA), we delivered $436 billion to them as payment for the foreign debt. Who is helping whom?

Eighth, the fight against terrorism can only be won through cooperation among all nations, with respect for international law, and not through massive bombings or pre-emptive wars against dark corners of the world. We must put an end to hypocrisy and double standards. Sheltering three Cuban-born terrorists in the United States is an act complicit with terrorism. Punishing five young Cuban antiterrorists, together with their families, is a crime.

Ninth, general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, is impossible today. It is the responsibility of a group of developed countries that are the ones that sell and buy the most weapons. However, we must continue to strive for this goal. We must demand that the over $900 billion set aside every year for military expenditures be used for development.

Tenth, the financial resources to guarantee the sustainable development of all peoples on the planet are available, but what is lacking is the political will of those who rule the world. A development tax of merely 0.1 per cent on international financial transactions would generate resources amounting to almost $400 billion a year. The cancellation of the foreign debt incurred by underdeveloped countries would allow them to have no less than $436 billion a year available for their development, money which is currently used to pay off the constantly-rising debt. If developed countries complied with their commitment to set aside 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as ODA, and not 0.2 per cent as they currently do, their contribution would increase from the current $68.4 billion to $160 billion a year.

Lastly, I want to clearly express Cuba's profound conviction that the 6.4 billion human beings on this planet — who have equal rights according to the United Nations Charter — urgently require a new order in which the world is not in suspense, as is the case now, awaiting the outcome of the elections in a new Rome, in which only half the voters will participate and nearly $1.5 billion will be spent.

There is no discouragement in our words; I must make that clear. We are optimistic, because we are revolutionaries. We have faith in the struggle of the peoples, and we are sure that we will achieve a new world order based on respect for the rights of all — an order based on solidarity, justice and peace, resulting from the best of universal culture, not from mediocrity or brute force.

With regard to Cuba — and neither blockades, threats, hurricanes, droughts, nor human or natural force can divert it from its course — I shall say nothing. On 28 October, for the thirteenth time, the General Assembly will discuss and vote on a draft resolution on the blockade against the Cuban people. Once again, morality and principles will defeat arrogance and force.

I conclude by recalling the words spoken here 25 years ago by President Fidel Castro:

> "The clashing of weapons, the threatening language and the overbearing behaviour in the international arena must cease. Enough of the illusion that the problems of the world can be solved by nuclear weapons. Bombs may kill the hungry, the sick and the ignorant; but bombs cannot kill hunger, disease and ignorance. Nor can bombs kill the righteous rebellion of the peoples." (*A/34/PV.31, para. 146*)

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luis Ernesto Derbez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Derbez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The session of the General Assembly over which you will preside, Sir, will be one of the most important in the history of the United Nations. It will be a session characterized by the necessary renewal of the United Nations. The year 2005 will be decisive for the future of multilateralism and of our global Organization.

The debate on Iraq and the spreading wave of international terrorism have raised a series of questions about the future of our collective security system. At this session, the General Assembly has before it the task of beginning an unprecedented reflection on the changes our societies require of multilateral diplomacy. Our efforts must result in new tools that will enable the United Nations to find effective solutions to carry out the lofty mission of tackling anew the tasks of development, maintaining world peace and security, promoting human rights and democracy and protecting the environment — all under the rule of international law.

As a result of recent debates, some have raised their voices to assert that the international community is fractured and even in conflict. It is curious that that is happening at a time in the life of the world when threats and challenges are more clearly shared by all nations. The tasks that should unite us focus on the fight against abject poverty, international terrorism, organized crime syndicates, major epidemics, the proliferation of arsenals of weapons of mass destruction and the deterioration of the environment. In order to put an end to those ills, concerted action and commitment are required from all States. The reason is obvious: the most complex threats we face do not have any specific national origin, but they affect us all and have ultimately worsened the quality of life in the world and damaged the peace and well-being of our citizens.

The United Nations was designed to put an end to the scourge of wars between nations and to promote the economic and social development of peoples. We face phenomena of such magnitude and complexity that the delegates who attended the San Francisco Conference — despite their outstanding talent and vision — could not have anticipated at the time. The diplomats of our generation have the obligation of envisioning a second phase, inaugurating a new chapter of collective action to eradicate these dangerous modern-day evils.

In Mexico's view, the goal to which we should aspire is not to rebuild the Organization from scratch or to discard the United Nations Charter, with its rich heritage of agreements and concepts. It would not be responsible to abandon such essential tools as legitimate individual or collective self-defence, as set out in Article 51, and the establishment of a collective security system. The only viable, rational and necessary approach is to update the multilateral system of cooperation and understanding that we have built together.

It was on the basis of those considerations that President Vicente Fox of Mexico, when he addressed the General Assembly last year, made a robust appeal for comprehensive reform of the United Nations. Furthermore, in many meetings that he has held since then with other heads of State or Government, he has expressed considerable interest in moving forward — with the urgency that the situation requires — towards strengthening and revitalizing the United Nations.

That is why we have undertaken an effort of active coordination aimed at reforming the United Nations and strengthening multilateralism. Mexico, together with 14 other countries, has begun an effort of joint reflection to analyse the various components of reform and to devise a diplomatic strategy to guide the steady progress of United Nations reform.

We envision reform with an evolutionary approach that would enable the United Nations to tackle the most delicate challenges and threats of each historical cycle, drawing on the resources and strengths of all Member States in order to overcome the most disturbing international phenomena. That exercise should begin to bear fruit in the next 18 months.

Two thousand and five will be an appropriate year to promote this ambitious project: there will be a convergence of events that will enable us to revitalize multilateral dialogue and interaction. First, in December 2004, we will receive the report and the recommendations of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which will be of valuable assistance in guiding our deliberations on reform of the system. It will be very important that we examine those recommendations in minute detail and that the General Assembly be the central forum for discussing and adopting the new mandates and changes that must be implemented in the Organization. Likewise, next year we will have to assess the progress made in implementing the Millennium Declaration and the steps taken to follow up the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development.

That series of events in 2005 will give us an up-to-date view of the state of the multilateral system and of the issues that reform should address. With that broad perspective, and so that we can live up to the commitment and interest of all Member States, we will need to ensure a balance between the security and development agendas and their respective institutions within the system. The General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council must work as part of an organic whole, not as entities that are disconnected and sometimes even at odds in their tasks, priorities and working methods.

The predominance of the Security Council has resulted in growing disregard for the work of other principal organs and has diminished their effectiveness. This causes certain issues to be marginalized; then, when they reach crisis level, they become matters for which the Security Council becomes responsible. We also must acknowledge that the overall process of United Nations reform has been dominated — in fact, paralysed — by the debate on restructuring the Security Council.

Mexico believes that any Security Council reform process should be governed by a set of common objectives and criteria. After more than a decade of work, we should ask ourselves why Security Council reform has not succeeded. The debate has focused on the number of seats, how they should be allocated to each region and whether or not they should be permanent seats. Mexico does not share that approach because, paradoxically, the fundamental question that has largely been ignored — which came to the fore during the critical discussion on Iraq — is not how many members there should be on the Security Council and how many should be permanent; rather, it is what kind of collective security system does the international community need today, and what mechanisms should be used to face new challenges and, above all, to prevent conflicts.

The Security Council must create conditions that will prevent the emergence of conflicts, particularly through building and consolidating national institutions and upholding the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Council should also enhance its capacity to consistently identify situations likely to endanger peace and security. As a logical outcome of such an analysis, we can then identify the changes needed in the Security Council.

Mexico acknowledges the contributions of Member States to the cause of peace, all of them necessary. Our Organization, based on the legal equality of States, requires the commitment and support of all its Members, through their involvement in decision-making. The creation of new permanent seats would lead to greater concentration of the international decision-making process than is now the case. We cannot ignore the fact that permanent members of the Council already have more influence than the rest of the membership. Mexico considers that this should be restricted and not further increased.

Mexico supports collective decision-making as the source of the legitimacy and effectiveness of our actions in favour of peace and security. In that regard, we favour a regionally equitable and balanced enlargement of the number of elected members, based on modalities determined within the regional groups. That would stimulate wider participation in the decision-making process and would ensure that more countries, not fewer, can contribute their views in the Council.

Thus, Mexico would support an increase in the number of elected members and an extension of their term of office, with the option of immediate re-election for those States that have demonstrated, through their performance, a strong commitment to the purposes of the Organization. That would help us to create a genuine mechanism for accountability, founded on Article 24 of the Charter.

As part of this integral vision of reform, it is crucial also to strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council, which supports the Security Council and the General Assembly in the decision-making process. Conflict prevention depends upon timely attention to and action on problems that lead to a lack of access to development. It is undeniable that peace and security are anchored on the well-being of our peoples. Therefore, we believe that the Economic and Social Council should work as a coordinating body to steer the financing of development and to articulate the follow-up of commitments stemming from United Nations summits and conferences on social and economic development.

It is essential to have a more committed involvement of the international financial institutions in the development process. In that regard, the Economic and Social Council should play a pivotal role linking the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the private sector and civil society.

Another issue that is worth our attention in the reform process is the Commission on Human Rights, which has essential responsibilities regarding universal respect for individual rights and fundamental freedoms. Mexico considers that the work of the Commission is vital, although its procedural weakness in advancing its objectives is clear. For this reason, its methods must be urgently reformulated. Mexico is fostering regional dialogue on this issue.

The ongoing effort in favour of United Nations reform requires a vision of collective well-being and enhanced political understanding, in order to prevent "threats without a passport" from plunging the world into a spiral of confrontation, violence and despair. Here, we should recognize that the United Nations has already taken some first steps in the right direction, particularly in the fight against terrorism and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As part of the reform, it will be necessary to carry these actions further.

In this context, Mexico is ready to continue working with the institutional structures of the Organization, particularly the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the non-proliferation machinery. We will continue to promote the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the fight against terrorism as the only way to guarantee the legitimacy and efficacy of that fight. My country will also follow closely the cooperation initiatives and regimes geared to control the export of nuclear materials; and we will stress the need to strengthen efforts in the urgent cause of disarmament.

Other positive steps have been taken in recent years to confront the grave challenges resulting from humanitarian crises and genocide. In this context, Mexico concurs with the concept of the responsibility to protect, in the sense that sovereignty entails a State's obligation towards its population, and that, when it fails to fulfil it, the international community has the duty to collectively assist in the protection of individuals from serious human rights violations. In the light of recent regrettable humanitarian tragedies, it is of the utmost importance for the General Assembly to discuss this concept thoroughly, in order to elaborate guidelines for its practical application within the Organization.

Bearing in mind the scope of the reform challenge facing us, Mexico would favour the convening of a general conference with the aim of updating and strengthening our Organization. In contrast to the consideration that has been given to other issues of international relevance, such as trade, population and the environment, we have not held any open-ended rounds of negotiations in the last six decades on issues pertaining to international politics and the progressive development of diplomacy. The changes that have taken place in the world in that period demand a comprehensive exercise that should encompass the renewal of our commitments, review of collective security structures and their performance, above all, promotion of economic development.

Throughout President Fox's administration, Mexico has clearly shown its commitment to the strengthening of multilateralism. We have done so as an elected member of the Security Council, as a promoter of international conventions on topics such as corruption, persons with disabilities and migrants, by furthering initiatives to foster the equitable and sustainable development of global areas and by hosting high-level conferences such as the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and the Summit of the Americas.

Furthermore, as an unequivocal sign of our interest, our concerns and our commitment, Mexico is decisively promoting the revitalization of the multilateral system through the Group of Friends for the Reform of the United Nations.

It is in that constructive spirit that Mexico is taking part in this session of the General Assembly. We are certain that under your able leadership, Mr. President, this session will be remembered as the catalyst for one of the most important and dominant chapters in the life of our Organization.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Abubakr Al-Qirbi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Qirbi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to begin my remarks by congratulating Mr. Ping on the vote of confidence represented by his election as President of the current session of the Assembly. Given his wisdom and organizational skills, I am confident that he will be able to lead our deliberations successfully. Thus, his positive input will further enhance the stature and effectiveness of the United Nations at a time of profound and unprecedented transformation on the world scene.

I wish also to commend the efforts and wisdom of his predecessor for his remarkable stewardship. Furthermore, Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, deserves our gratitude for his persistent efforts to live up to the demands of his office in the face of complex and daunting challenges and surprises.

Undoubtedly, the events of the past two years — specifically from the period prior to and after the occupation of Iraq — have shown clearly that, in today's world, unilateralism in determining international action inevitably leads to the proliferation of hotbeds of tension, in addition to jeopardizing international peace and security. At the same time, those events have further demonstrated the relevance of multilateralism in global decision-making through international institutions, especially this world body.

Given that the United Nations represents a superior form of multilateralism, because it brings together Member States to address common concerns over the maintenance of collective security and to face universal challenges, it is only logical that we all should join together to protect it against marginalization and to safeguard and strengthen its role. Thus, we should not allow the will of one Power, or of a certain group of Powers, to direct the actions of the United Nations system or permit it to be used to advance their agenda without regard for the wishes and interests of the rest of the membership.

A case in point, in our view, is the need to reconsider the decision-making process in the Security Council, its composition and membership. The realities of our contemporary world and the imperatives of global security, which is indivisible, must be fully taken into consideration in any review exercise. No single State or group of States can alone guarantee global security or assume the responsibility of that undertaking without active participation by other States. In addition, decisions that are not in line with international law, the Charter of the United Nations or the view of the majority of the membership should be vehemently opposed.

As this session coincides with the third anniversary of the 11 September tragedy, once again the Republic of Yemen reaffirms its commitment to fight extremism and terrorism within the framework established and led by the United Nations. Yemen, for its part, has made great progress in combating terrorism and terrorists. The most recent achievement involved defeating a group that had rebelled against the Constitution and the rule of law in the Sa'dah region in Yemen. Those rebels had resorted to terrorism in order to achieve their goals. Their terrorist acts harmed innocent civilians and disrupted security and stability in the area.

The Government of Yemen, while fully responsible for the safety and security of its citizens and the homeland, remains faithful to its international commitment to combat terrorism. Our conviction is that terrorism has no specific identity or particular religion. The struggle for national liberation or to end foreign occupation is a legitimate right under the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the basic principles of justice and human rights. Such a struggle can therefore not be treated as terrorism. In addition, Yemen's experience in combating terrorism has taught us that in order effectively to battle terrorism, all possible resources must be deployed, including its root causes, dialogue, the promotion of development and justice, in addition to good security and intelligence work.

Yemen is a strong believer in the United Nations. However, we believe that, despite all the efforts made by the dynamic Secretariat of this great institution, the gaps between rich and poor countries are widening. That is partly due to current economic policies that strengthen the dominance of wealthy nations over poor countries. Today more than ever we need to examine in earnest the imbalances in international economic relations.

The first step we expect in this regard is the fulfilment by wealthier nations of the pledges and undertakings announced in their initiatives for achieving economic balance between the rich and the poor. Failure to do so, as I presume all of us recognize, would deepen the sense of bitterness felt by the poor countries. It might also breed extremism and violence to which no country would be immune.

In that context, the Government of the Republic of Yemen believes that the recognition by the leaders of the Group of Eight industrial nations that the consolidation of peace in the Middle East and the promotion of economic growth and political development through a process of overall development in all countries of the region — as outlined in the G-8 declaration adopted at their most recent Summit in Sea Island, Georgia, United States — represents a very significant statement and a positive strategic challenge of interest to us and to the international community in general.

It is indeed a challenge, because this long-overdue vision seeks to correct a chronic anomaly. It is also a challenge because of its positive implications and the shift in focus it can bring in favour of global stability and international peace and security once that abstract concept is translated into concrete and meaningful steps on the ground. That will require genuine partnerships and the abandoning of policies of coercion.

Proceeding from these convictions, Yemen welcomed that initiative and agreed to participate in the G-8 Sea Island Summit for two reasons: first, because that vision is in line with our national plan for reform, and, secondly, because we welcome any partnership between Arab States, the European Union, the United States of America and the world at large that enhances our development and stability and contributes to the fight against terrorism.

The commitment of my Government to build a better future for the people of Yemen and the people of our region has prompted us to institute numerous economic and political reforms, broaden popular involvement in governance, and strengthen our partnership with other countries and entities.

This was highlighted in the Sana'a Declaration on Democracy, Human Rights and the Role of the International Criminal Court, adopted earlier this year at the Sana'a Intergovernmental Regional Conference.

A number of other countries, represented by their Governments, Parliaments and civil society, regional and international organizations, took part in that forum. The Forum was organized in response to reform initiatives that came from the Governments and peoples of the region. It stressed that good democratic governance and respect for human rights require full mobilization of the energies and potential of civil society. They also require interaction among all stakeholders, with a sense of responsibility and partnership with Governments, and support from outside the region, in order to use overall development as a vehicle towards stability, progress and movement on the road towards democracy and overall human development.

No one can ignore the great achievements made by our Organization in promoting peace, security and welfare over the course of its rich history. But one should, by the same token, admit that it has failed to resolve numerous conflicts that have endangered, and continue to endanger, the security and stability of many nations and peoples. Foremost among these dangers is the Arab-Israeli conflict. Certainly, the United Nations has failed to put an end to ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and to Israel's repeated threats against Arab countries. Also, there are many trouble spots and areas of conflict across the globe that the United Nations must address effectively if we want international peace and security to prevail.

The position of the Republic of Yemen regarding the question of Palestine is abundantly clear. It is based on the principles laid out by the Quartet in the road map, and on those contained in the Arab Peace Initiative. This Initiative calls for the establishment of a State of Palestine with full sovereignty over its territory and with Jerusalem as its capital; Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since 4 June 1967; and the return of refugees to their homes.

All along, Yemen has maintained that peace in the Middle East will elude us as long as Israel is allowed to manoeuvre and circumvent United Nations resolutions. We also believe that Israel will not accept the aforesaid solutions unless a Security Council resolution is adopted with a view to imposing a solution on Israel that includes an enforcement mechanism. Contrary to our hopes, the entire question has become even more intractable and difficult to comprehend, especially given the use of the veto power against any proposed resolution that would force Israel to implement United Nations resolutions. This has encouraged Israel to persist in constructing the racially-based separation wall, which aggravates the suffering of the Palestinian people and is taking away sizeable tracts of their remaining land, in defiance of global consensus and of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

We wish to emphasize here that, as recent events have demonstrated, the wall cannot guarantee security to Israel. Israel's genuine security could be achieved if it were to accept the road map and commit itself to implementing relevant United Nations resolutions.

We demand that the Security Council ensure the physical safety of the Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, provide protection for the Palestinian people against Israeli state-sponsored terrorism, and show respect for the wishes and the will of the Palestinian people.

In addition, Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian and Lebanese territories is an integral part of any Middle East peace initiative. I wish to recall in this regard that the Arab Peace Initiative represents an Arab consensus for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Furthermore, my Government considers inadmissible the threats that the Israeli military machine fires against sister Syria and against Iran from time to time. This represents irresponsible provocation that exacerbates the already tense situation in the region. The timing of these threats further fuels violence and frustrates peace endeavours aimed at finding a just and negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. They also represent an attempt by the Israeli Government to distract attention from its failure to ensure security for its citizens. The time has come for Israel to recognize that its stability and acceptance by countries of the region will remain unfulfilled unless it implements the road map and relevant United Nations resolutions, and withdraws from the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, the Golan and the Shab'a farms.

In the same context, I wish to affirm my country's support for United Nations efforts regarding the convening of a disarmament conference which aims, inter alia, at the establishment of the Middle East region as a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. To this end, Israel must accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The current violence in Iraq, and the violation of human rights and bloodshed of our Iraqi brothers is an inevitable outcome of an invasion. Thus, it is incumbent upon the United Nations to fulfil its role, as set forth in relevant resolutions, regarding the need to provide support to Iraq with a view to restoring peace and stability throughout the country. The interim Iraqi Government should be empowered to exercise full sovereignty in order to lead Iraq towards holding democratic elections and forming a constitutional Government that represents the will of the Iraqi people, restores law and order and puts an end to the occupation of the country. The tragic situation unfolding today in Iraq, in the wake of the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime, has resulted in terrorism, violations and chaos, which all of us can see. That situation may take Iraq down a slippery slope of sectarian violence and conflict which, in turn, will threaten the unity and future of Iraq.

Yemen believes that all of us should assist and support the interim Government in Iraq and the national and legislative councils to overcome the current critical transitional stage in accordance with Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), with a view toward safeguarding the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Iraq. Also, we must ensure that the forthcoming period leading to parliamentary elections and the formation of a national Government will reflect the will of the Iraqi people without external interference. All effort should be made to develop and define political solutions for the complex situation, and to provide to the interim Government all it may need in order to achieve a successful outcome. Priority should be given to enabling the Iraqi Government to start the process of national reconciliation, ensuring the participation of all factions and political groups in defining the future of Iraq and closing the annals of the past. We also call for an end to violence against civilians, as well as excessive military reactions by the occupation forces, which victimize innocent civilians and lead to further destruction, pushing moderates towards extremism.

In view of Yemen's sense of fraternal responsibility towards Iraq, we submitted to the last Arab summit in Tunis, an initiative conceived on the basis of a set of firm principles set forth in United Nations resolutions. In essence, the initiative contained guiding principles for assisting the brotherly people of Iraq to overcome their current crisis. It also called for setting timelines to link efforts to restore security and stability with ending of the occupation. In the meantime, Yemen supports any Arab or international endeavour that might help Iraq move safely to achieve peace, stability and national unity.

My country believes that national reconciliation based on dialogue and national unity is a viable path toward settling the long-running dispute and conflict in Somalia. Therefore, we congratulate the Somali leaders on the progress they have so far achieved within the framework of the reconciliation process. At the same time, we call upon all warring factions in Somalia to build on that success and to put the highest national interests of Somalia ahead of their own agendas. Yemen, which has played a leading role in promoting national reconciliation in Somalia, calls upon the United Nations and the international community to assume fully and effectively their responsibilities in order to bring about peace and security in Somalia.

The Yemeni Government appreciates the current efforts being made to assist the national reconciliation talks in Somalia to reach a successful outcome, that is the formation of a consultative council, election of a President for the country, and formation of an interim Government that will lead Somalia towards drafting a new constitution and setting up a democratic system of government. Yemen, of course, will align itself with the good offices of the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya, and supported by the European Union and the United States, to promote reconciliation.

The Republic of Yemen has been closely following the humanitarian situation in the Darfur province of sisterly Sudan. I wish to underline here the decisions adopted by the Council of Arab Foreign Ministers, which met at the headquarters of the Arab League early last August. That meeting was also attended by the head of the African Union Commission and the Foreign Minister of Nigeria representing President Obasanjo of Nigeria — the current Chairman of the African Union. We wish also to reaffirm the decisions adopted in this regard by the Council of Arab Foreign Ministers in its regular session on 14 and 15 September. Those decisions reflected the joint Arab-African position regarding the situation in Darfur. They affirmed the need to address the matter within the African Arab framework. They also rejected all attempts to create a rift in Arab-African relations and stressed that there was no hard evidence of genocide. Furthermore, the meeting underlined the responsibility of the Government of the Sudan for maintaining security and stability, providing protection for its citizens and disarming all militias in the region. The success of the Sudanese Government in achieving those goals will depend on the degree of international support and humanitarian relief assistance provided to it. All external parties must also refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the Sudan.

The Government of the Sudan must assume its responsibility for deploying its forces so as to ensure security, provide protection for all of its citizens and confront all of the armed groups responsible for the crisis. In the meantime, all the logistical support needed by the Government of Sudan should be provided by the African Union and Arab States with a view to achieving those objectives.

The Sudan's response to relevant Security Council resolutions, including the steps it has begun to take, clearly demonstrate its genuine commitment to its undertakings. Furthermore, we call on the United Nations, especially the Security Council, to address the issue on the basis of an accurate assessment of the situation in Darfur which obviously has begun to improve. We must avoid favouring one side at the expense of the other. We should also shift our focus to address the humanitarian situation without regard to political considerations or motives. All of the parties to the Darfur dispute, including the Government of the Sudan, should be urged to participate constructively and unconditionally in peace talks, with a view to achieving a just solution to the crisis. Any attempt to use blackmail or to exploit events to the advantage of the rebel groups must be rejected. Any party that violates its commitments, as verified by a neutral security monitoring mechanism, should be held accountable.

The Government of the Republic of Yemen stresses that threatening or imposing a unilateral boycott or economic sanctions, as practised against some Member States, would constitute an explicit violation of the principles of international law — regardless of the fact that such practices have failed on the ground in more than one case. Indeed, sanctions and boycotts aggravate the suffering of innocent civilians and lead to the escalation of hostilities.

My country supports the call by the United Nations to end unilateral measures, and it affirms the need to promote a culture of dialogue and understanding, even when dealing with controversial issues. That should, indeed, be the rational and civilized approach that all of us should pursue in resolving our disputes and mending our relationships.

Finally, my delegation wishes the General Assembly every success as it endeavours to fulfil its mandate during this session, with a view to reinforcing our common action to promote peace, security and welfare for all. It is our hope that the ongoing reform of the United Nations will achieve the long-awaited objectives, including equitable representation in the Security Council. That would enhance the Council's effectiveness and credibility and enable it to adapt better to the constantly changing landscape of international relations.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm that the Republic of Yemen will support any efforts aimed at strengthening the role of the United Nations and enhancing its credibility, safeguarding the sovereignty and will of its Member States and pooling our energies to create a better future for humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Karel de Gucht, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

Mr. De Gucht (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium's international commitment is rooted in the conviction that initiatives taken at the global level can move forward only through dialogue and cooperation. The careful European building process taught us that. That is why Belgium firmly believes in the virtues of multilateralism. We are stronger standing together than alone. By standing together, we benefit from greater legitimacy and therefore have better opportunities to make our voices heard.

The challenges facing the United Nations have the virtue of being clear. As the Secretary-General has said, the options that become available to the world will depend on the answers that we provide. The Organization's credibility will continue to be judged by its effectiveness and its results on the ground. We must improve and strengthen the United Nations apparatus. We fully support the Secretary-General's efforts in this difficult task. At the same time, we believe that the United Nations system should better reflect the new international realities.

The sustained commitment of the United Nations is required if we are to find a definitive solution to the crisis in the Great Lakes region. The conflict there has already cost millions of lives. We must not fail to respond; inaction would constitute negligence. While I do not underestimate the difficulties in this regard, I am convinced that a solution can be found. I refuse to believe, therefore, that the stabilization process is doomed to deadlock or failure. In order to find a solution, however, the international community must show that it can make a difference. In that regard, it is encouraging to note how dedicated the Secretary-General is to his mission. For its part, Belgium will continue to appeal to its European Union partners for a collective and committed involvement in the region.

It is essential that stability and security be fully established and guaranteed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is clear that the transition process must be successful. We in the international community cannot emphasize enough that political leaders have the duty to make it succeed. Indeed, there is no alternative to that process as a means of achieving peace and development in the region.

Nation-building is impossible as long as impunity and insecurity exist. In that respect, the restructuring and the integration of the army are essential, as is the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Belgium is currently training almost 300 Congolese soldiers under its Train the Trainers programme.

It is also essential that the International Committee to Accompany the Transition fully shoulder its responsibilities. For its part, Belgium is committed to taking an active part in the implementation of the declaration adopted by the countries members of that Committee.

The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is playing a crucial role, and Belgium attaches great importance to that. It is not only the credibility of the United Nations that is at stake here, but — more important — the future of an entire region. Belgium therefore supports a better targeted mandate for MONUC, as well as a strengthening of its means.

With our European partners, we are also considering the best way of making a joint contribution to that Mission. It goes without saying that the elections scheduled for 2005 will be crucial. They will require substantial human and financial means, to which Belgium has already decided it will contribute.

With regard to the situation in Rwanda, we offer our full support to the praiseworthy efforts made to achieve reconciliation. Normalized relations between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are absolutely indispensable and must be based on collaboration and good-neighbourly relations. This implies a mutual respect of the borders.

In many regards, the latest developments in Burundi are encouraging. A constitution has been adopted, a referendum has been announced and an electoral commission is in place. Elections are essential, of course, which is why Belgium has provided significant financial backing to their organization. I urge the international community to specify without delay what resources it is ready to mobilize for this purpose.

Belgium shares the concerns about the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. There is no excuse for the persecution and systematic massacre of thousands of human beings. Given the scale of the suffering, the efforts and the progress made thus far remain insufficient. Belgium therefore insists on the swift establishment of an international commission of inquiry.

The situation in Iraq will continue to present a considerable challenge over the coming months and even years. I congratulate the United Nations for its continued support to the Iraqi transition process, especially given the country's climate of insecurity. The population of Iraq, which has already faced so many ordeals, must finally be able to live in peace. It is, of course, the Iraqi people who must shoulder the responsibility of guiding the political process, a process that must lead to the creation of a new parliament, a new constitution and a sovereign Government. This Government must be capable of ensuring the well-being of its citizens, as well as the country's security, with no external assistance. To date, Belgium has allocated approximately €17 million to the reconstruction process and we will provide air transportation for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) personnel between Amman and Baghdad.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses a serious threat to world security. The regime of non-proliferation is jeopardized by an alarming situation; the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must regain its place within this regime without delay.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is located in a region full of tensions, and its security concerns are legitimate. The international community should therefore take this into account in its approach to the problem. And the Iranian authorities must cooperate entirely with the International Atomic Energy Agency and cease all activities linked to the enrichment of uranium. By so doing, Iran will contribute significantly to the stabilization and prosperity of the region.

The tragedy in Beslan has proved once again that terrorism attacks blindly. It goes without saying that no form of terrorism is justifiable. The indignation and analysis that such acts may provoke can in no way vary according to the victim, the location, the aggressor or the circumstances. Appropriate military means and security measures will remain necessary in order to fight terrorism, but means other than strictly military ones are also required. Indeed, the environment in which terrorism thrives is comprised of ideological, socio-economic, political and other variables.

This is why I plead for a dialogue between the West and the Arab and Muslim world, involving not only political leaders but also spiritual leaders, and not as a mere exchange of ideas or points of view, but in order to identify the instruments that could deny such barbarous acts all legitimacy and raison d'être, with a view to finally bringing this appalling logic of death to a halt.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jesús Arnaldo Pérez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Pérez (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): There are moments we can describe as historical turning points, when nations and peoples must decide which side they are on. This is one of these moments, when history will judge us and examine if we were democratic leaders that represented the will of our peoples.

It is clear that the peoples of the world are taking a stand against neo-liberal economics and war. They are fighting against those who would impose their will by military force and economic violence. They are resisting those who would undermine and even overthrow the basic principles that founded this Organization that brings us together today. Under such conditions, Venezuela echoes the call of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, that all the nations that proclaim the rule of law in their territory respect it abroad.

As you know, the majority of the peoples and Governments of the world took a stand against the illegal war in Iraq. In this context, Venezuela reaffirms the words of President Rodríguez Zapatero that peace is a task that demands more courage, more determination and more heroism than war.

The principal question for us is now the following: are we building a world of real democracy, equality and justice or a world led by the tyranny of economic and military power? The people of Venezuela were faced with such a decision last month, with a referendum on the presidency. In fact, in the last six years, Venezuelans have participated in eight democratic procedures, including referendums and elections. The 1999 Bolivarian Constitution of Venezuela allows for a mid-term referendum on a recall of the popular vote. On 15 August of this year, citizens of Venezuela clearly exercised their constitutional right and, in an historic referendum never before seen in the history of the world, ratified the mandate of President Hugo Chávez Frías, thus confirming the democratic process of structural transformation led by our President.

Since the end of the last millennium, we have witnessed tremendous dissent from citizens of the world against neo-liberalism and war. In my country, by the late eighties, a set of structural adjustments, developed under the influence of the main centres of neo-liberal capitalism, was met with a popular uprising that paralysed the country, leaving an indelible mark on our people's minds. That resistance, popularly known as "El Caracazo", was perhaps the first protest against neo-liberalism. The poor took control of the capital, Caracas, as well as cities across the country to demonstrate their discontent with increasing poverty and the unjust distribution of the profits from our nation's oil wealth. The ruling Government of the day responded by sending in armed forces to suppress the protests, killing thousands of people. That was a painfully tragic moment for the people of Venezuela. Nevertheless, that event provoked the necessary consciousness, igniting a political awakening among the people that allowed them to unite their voices in the fight against neo-liberalism.

Over the next decade, we witnessed protests against the World Trade Organization and against neo-liberalism in Chiapas, Davos, Seattle, Prague, Quebec City and Genoa. Wherever the architects of neo-liberalism gathered, they were met with massive protests in the streets.

We also witnessed the desperate actions of the brave South Korean farmer in Cancún, who gave his life to call attention to the plight of his fellow farmers on the brink of disaster throughout the world.

The war in Iraq only strengthened the global protests. On 15 February 2003, an estimated 30 million people around the world marched in protest and disbelief, unwilling to stand idly by as once again the world's screams fell on deaf ears, as not-so-smart bombs fell on little children without knowing why. If we combine the protests against neo-liberal globalization with the anti-war demonstrations, we will find a global rebellion of revolutionary proportions has started. What we need to decide now is whether we will march in the streets alongside our people or hide ourselves away in an ivory tower.

My fellow leaders, have we no eyes and ears? Can we not see the suffering? Can we not hear the cries of the poor, the disenfranchised, the disappeared and the desolate? Can we afford to shirk that responsibility?

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 44 per cent of Latin Americans live below the poverty line. Although Latin America is not the only region to face that reality, it is a particularly conspicuous example because it represents the laboratory of the neo-liberal project. Structural adjustment, as prescribed by the Washington Consensus, came early to Latin America, and its application here became the model for the neo-liberalization of the former communist-bloc countries in the 1990s.

Besides being the initial site of neo-liberalism's devastating experiment, Latin America was also the first to experience anti-neo-liberal explosion. Last March, UNDP released a report entitled "Democracy in Latin America", which highlighted a startling revelation: more than half of Latin Americans would prefer dictatorship over democracy if an authoritarian regime would solve their economic problems.

A second report, released this past August by the private firm Latinobarómetro, came to a similarly depressing conclusion — but with one notable exception: between 1996 and 2004 support for democracy actually grew in Venezuela, much more so than in any other country in the region. In Venezuela support for democracy has undoubtedly increased. Could it be that there is a direct correlation between those findings and the fact that Venezuela is actively pursuing a viable alternative to market democracy?

The Nobel Prize-winning economist, Amartya Sen, affirms that democracy is the best remedy for hunger. Indeed, in Venezuela, under the leadership of President Hugo Chávez Frías, we achieved that goal by giving power to the poor. To reduce poverty, it is necessary to increase democracy. There is no other way. Democracy is also the only way to defeat terrorism. No matter if poverty and hunger create the conditions for its existence, there are no "good" and "bad" terrorists. There is only one terrorism — reprehensible, detestable and cowardly. But, once again, only through greater democracy can we defeat it.

What the UNDP report reveals is that Latin Americans have lost faith in a model of democracy whose scope is limited to political representation. It is a model that has entirely ignored the economic, social and participatory facets of democracy and which has consequently completely failed to reflect the popular will. As Simon Bolívar, our visionary liberator, advocated two centuries ago, the best form of government is one that provides the highest degree of happiness, stability and social security for its people.

A few days ago, President Lula of Brazil chaired a hugely successful meeting of world leaders on the theme "Action Against Hunger and Poverty". That wonderful initiative, co-sponsored by Presidents Chirac, Lagos Escobar and Rodríguez Zapatero, expressed our common vision to fight against poverty and social injustice to guarantee security and sustainable development in both the North and the South. Our absolute support for that initiative is expressed in the document on the subject of ending poverty and giving power to the poor which we distributed to Members at the beginning of the General Assembly session.

To that end we recognize the need to go beyond the traditional official development assistance framework. Venezuela's contribution to the fight against hunger represents a genuine attempt to place the tools of development in the hands of those who need it most. In shifting from food aid to food sovereignty, we are not limiting ourselves to helping to feed the poor; rather, we are committed to helping the poor to feed themselves.

For that reason food sovereignty in Venezuela puts a clear emphasis on assisting small producers from community-run cooperatives. A far-reaching land reform has already transferred over 2 million hectares of land to small producers. We have also made a firm commitment to create a world seed bank in our country to protect our heritage of seeds from the violent encroachments of transgenic and genetically modified crops.

In addition, we have recently created a Ministry of Food and Nutrition to guarantee our people their fundamental rights in that area.

Venezuela ardently supports the initiatives under way to reform the United Nations. As supporters of multilateralism and participatory democracy, we claim a greater participation of the countries of the South at the United Nations, and particularly in a more democratic Security Council, one in which there is no right of veto. In that regard, we support the candidacy of Brazil as a permanent member of an expanded Council.

Venezuela aspires to join the Economic and Social Council for the period 2005-2007. Our presence in the Economic and Social Council will help the peoples of the South to promote at the global level the ideas and social justice we are trying to enact domestically. To achieve that objective and to attain the Millennium Development Goals, we believe that the countries possessing the resources must make a financial effort commensurate with the challenge.

Venezuela has invested $2 billion in social programmes this year, and we recently helped establish a fund of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to combat desertification and drought, which greatly threaten our African brothers. That assistance from OPEC members reflects our solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Africa. Venezuela has already had the opportunity to assist several African countries through its policy of cooperation.

The United Nations was born in a world that was traumatized by the atrocities of Second World War, yet had the hope of creating a world of greater dignity for human beings.

Fifty-five years later, when we observe that the will of the General Assembly is often not respected, it appears that we have lost our course. Thus, we run the risk of submerging the world in a war of a thousand years. It is time to put an end to the hypocrisy that permits a situation in which some resolutions are followed while others go unheeded.

Let us have the courage to recover the original goals of the Assembly. If we are courageous, we will recognize not only that another world is possible but that this other world is crucial for humanity.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

Mr. Cimoszewicz (Poland): The agenda of this session not only is full of importance and burning issues but also brings great hopes and expectations. In his statement, Mr. Bernard Bot, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, presented the European Union's position on the most important problems. That statement fully reflects our thinking and concerns. One issue, however, that deserves our special attention today is the reform of the United Nations.

The present session of the General Assembly must be remembered as a session of reform. It should lay the foundations for a profound and consensus-based reflection on the relevance and the effectiveness of the United Nations. This reflection should result in bold and imaginative decisions providing for a substantial overhaul of the Organization. That is how we in Poland see the preparations for the major event of 2005, which will undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration Goals and mark the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted, the United Nations is at a fork in the road. It is time to act.

Every year, at the annual general debate of the General Assembly, we take the floor to express our views — sometimes very critical — on the work of the Organization. However, there is little evidence that these debates have had any significant impact on the future of the United Nations. Indeed, over the past years, the United Nations has seen many celebratory and majestic gatherings. Unless we are able to build a political consensus and work out efficient, forward-looking and workable decisions, we should cut down on high-level ceremonies.

Poland has frequently voiced its conviction that we have to carry out a comprehensive, strategic review of the role of the United Nations in both its normative and institutional aspects. It was with this in mind that, on behalf of my country two years ago, I had the privilege of putting forward the idea of a new political act for the United Nations. We are pleased to see that, two years later, that belief and determination are widely shared.

Bearing in mind the unique momentum for reform, we look forward to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. They should provide the critical mass for the reform efforts and form a solid basis for further actions.

In that context, I express my gratitude to the members of the Panel, who came to Warsaw in May this year to consult with representatives of our part of Europe on the most important conceptual aspects of the reform. The Warsaw Regional Conference was a rewarding experience. The report issued following the conference has been made available to all delegations at the Assembly.

We have never had any problem with ideas, excellent proposals and promising initiatives. The biggest obstacle to reform, rather, has been the lack of political consensus. The reform cannot be effective if it reflects the ideas of small groups of specialists or politicians alone. It must rely on a broad consensus and reflect a shared community of values and a sense of identity and purpose. Building that consensus is our major, common task.

The reform of the United Nations has to go beyond institutional aspects, but we recognize the fact that institutions are important. Therefore, any reform package lacking ideas for reforming the organs of the United Nations would be considered inadequate by the majority of Member States.

Poland shares the common opinion that it is hard to imagine strengthening the role of the Security Council without increasing its legitimacy. Today's discussions on Council reform are focused mainly on expanding its membership. However, the key to a more effective and legitimate Security Council does not lie in the number of its members. A Council of 24 members would probably have no more powerful a voice than a Council of 15. However, at the present stage of discussions, we agree that the Security Council has to be expanded.

One of the deficiencies of the United Nations, as it transpires from the conceptual discussions, is that there is too great a gap between the functions of mandating and implementing. Therefore, we believe that it is the responsibility of the members of the Security Council to take the lead in providing political and material support for implementation of Security Council mandates. Security Council reform should be based on the assumption that membership on the Council not only confers additional privileges but also brings additional responsibilities.

The reform should preserve the inherent balance among the various organs of the United Nations. While we support the tendency to expect more from the Security Council, any reform should be accompanied by a more effective role for the General Assembly. The two bodies should be seen as mutually supportive and reinforcing organs.

However, in order to use the potential of the General Assembly effectively and optimize its performance, we must profoundly change the way we speak to one another in this forum. This must be a forum of dialogue. Occasionally, one hears jokes along the lines that the General Assembly is a place where everybody speaks but nobody listens. We have to change that. We must start talking to one another more directly, more candidly. Let me assure the President, as we congratulate him on the assumption of his post, that Poland will support all his efforts in that regard.

We need to enhance the performance of the bodies of the United Nations in social and economic development and the environment, as well as in other, related, no less pressing areas. There is a real danger that the Millennium Development Goals will not be fulfilled. That would deliver a serious blow to the credibility of the United Nations. Given that the distinction between socio-economic and political issues is becoming increasingly blurred, we need a unified approach.

However, the existing efforts are often too fragmented, uncoordinated, and even contradictory and self-paralytic. In this context, the role of the Economic and Social Council and its reform should be strictly linked with other United Nations bodies.

In order to be comprehensive, the reform cannot stop at its institutional dimension. We need to revisit the nature of current security challenges that expose the deficiencies and shortcomings of our Organization in the most systematic way. Predictable threats caused in the past by wars between countries have been replaced by indefinite and unpredictable threats caused by international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), and an increasing number of States in distress, whose Governments are unable to exercise effective power over their territory and population. As a consequence, we are facing an unprecedented spread of terrorist acts and violence.

In this context, on behalf of the people of Poland and myself, I express our deepest condolences to the relatives of the victims of the recent events in Beslan. We condemn this barbaric act and offer our solidarity with the victims.

To cope properly and successfully with the new nature of threats and challenges, it is necessary to use this opportunity to examine the functional and conceptual basis of the Organization. Therefore, Poland advocates that the important part of the reform should be re-examination of the conceptual foundations of the United Nations.

In today's world, new threats cast a new light on the concepts that we use to regulate the international order. Principles such as non-use of force, sovereignty, legitimacy, accountability for both States and their leaders, subsidiarity, complementarity, solidarity and responsibility still occupy the highest level of importance. What we need is their adjustment to the current reality, new political guidelines on how we, and how Security Council members in particular, should translate them into action.

Among these concepts, the principle of solidarity, is for us more than just assisting the poor and underdeveloped. Solidarity is an operational principle that should generate cooperative attitudes for countries in need, including those plagued by terrorism, natural and man-made disasters and calamities, weak State structures, and so forth.

One of the most important issues, in the light of the particularly threatening nexus of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, is the principle of the non-use of force. The following aspects should be examined: anticipatory self-defence, humanitarian intervention and collective use of force with authorization by the Security Council.

In this respect, we need a code of conduct that will give us sufficient predictability as to how we, as Members of the United Nations, will act on the international scene when employing the United Nations as our instrument of choice and how we will make the best use of its potential.

We also hope that the reform will strengthen the role of the United Nations as a community of values. The United Nations was born to unite its Members against threats and enemies. Today, it should unite us for positive change in the consolidation of values, such as human rights, democracy, social justice, and development, which constitute the backbone and moral foundation of humankind.

When preparing future decisions, we should discuss not only the content but also the form. Poland believes that the best approach to this is to have a political document that would both spell out the reinforced message about the role, principles and values, and also contain the necessary institutional adjustments. We most definitely regard this document as something more than a set of amendments to the United Nations Charter.

We have to completely change the way we perceive the United Nations. For many years, most of our countries have been asking themselves what they can get from the Organization. Today, it is time for all of us to secure the future of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Geir Haarde, Minister for Finance and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Iceland.

Mr. Haarde (Iceland): Sir, it is with great pleasure that I congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

We are living in trying and turbulent times. As we meet, the world continues to be haunted by the spectre of terrorism, as most recently evidenced in Russia and Iraq. The victims are, as always, the innocent. The objective is global instability and insecurity, leading to increased intolerance and social regression. The hideousness of the means employed by terrorists exposes them for what they are. No just political cause can be served by such acts.

The war against terrorism is a struggle against barbarism. The perpetrators of terror must be rooted out and their bases and networks destroyed. This war is inherently a campaign in support of the values of the

United Nations — the values that we all seek to foster — and it is in response to a threat that has serious implications for all of the Member States of our Organization. Our challenge is actively to defend freedom against the forces of tyranny to affect the conditions that help create the spectre of terrorism.

If anyone thought the threats to global security that provided the impetus for looking at serious reforms of the United Nations system had receded, then surely the recent terrorist outrage in southern Russia gives pause for reflection. The great challenges in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as in parts of Africa, and the considerable work still remaining to achieve the Millennium Development Goals testify to the fact that the need for change has not passed. On the contrary.

The High-level Panel will soon submit its report, and next year a summit is planned for the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations and the fifth year after the Millennium Summit. Iceland believes that we now have a historic opportunity to undertake meaningful and long-awaited reform. This would in no small way be a reinforcement of the idea of multilateralism and, if genuine and far-sighted, will equip the United Nations to deal more effectively with threats to global security.

It will be our weighty responsibility here next year to hammer out decisions on reform. We will have the opportunity to make changes that will equip the multilateral system to be more effective in preventing conflict, in resolving conflict where it occurs and in post-conflict peace-building.

We can of course choose to do nothing. We can linger complacently in the inertia of the status quo. The consequence would, however, be that the United Nations would become less and less capable of facing these common challenges to our security.

In particular, we must grasp the chance to make the Security Council itself more representative, while increasing its efficiency and effectiveness. The discussions of many years on increasing the number of non-permanent and permanent seats must reach a conclusion. It is time that certain countries that have long made a considerable contribution to the work of the United Nations be given permanent seats on the Security Council. I am referring in particular to Germany, India, Japan and Brazil. But it is no less important to ensure that Africa also be given a permanent seat on the Council.

Smaller States make up the vast majority of United Nations Members. Ensuring that smaller States are adequately represented in the various organs of the United Nations is not only a matter of paying due regard to the principles of sovereignty; it is also a practical matter of ensuring that the particular challenges faced by smaller States — both island States and others — are taken into account in the multilateral system. Iceland knows the problems related to being far away from potential markets. We know well the struggle of small economies to diversify, and we have direct experience of the vulnerability of small countries to external economic shocks and natural disasters. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our sympathy to all those Caribbean States that have suffered so much in the recent hurricanes. My Government is considering ways in which it could contribute to disaster relief or reconstruction.

Just as it is fundamental to the legitimacy of the Security Council that there be fair representation of the various regions of the world, it is also important that the many smaller States feel that their issues are understood and taken into account. In that context, I would like to refer to the previously announced candidacy of my country, Iceland, for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2009-2010, which was already endorsed in 1998 by the Nordic States — Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden — within the Group of Western European and other States.

Smaller States make a valuable contribution to running the multilateral system. Smaller States provide some of the most innovative thinking on approaches to the challenges we face and — in per capita terms and often in absolute terms — are some of the most generous contributors.

An issue of key concern to small island States, but also to the world at large, is sustainable use of the world's resources. As Iceland completed its term as a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), my Government was very pleased to see the organizational changes in the working methods of the CSD implemented at its twelfth session, in April. My Government looks forward to continuing its active participation in the future work of the CSD to achieve and promote the sustainable development of the world's resources. Iceland will also continue to work on alternative energy resources, particularly the possibilities of hydrogen as a clean-energy provider.

Iceland is committed to attaining the Millennium Development Goals as they are set out in the Millennium Declaration. My Government will participate actively in the preparations for the major summit in 2005. It is clear that the international community must speed up its efforts in order to achieve, before 2015, the goals set by the Millennium Summit. We regard the 2005 summit to be one of the important milestones on the way to attaining them.

I now turn to questions concerning particular regions. Iceland warmly welcomes the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiative and its aim of ensuring democracy, human rights, good governance and sound economic management. The efforts of African countries in the management and resolution of conflicts in their own region and the establishment of a Peace and Security Council within the African Union are ground-breaking developments, as are the African mediation in a number of conflicts and the efforts of the African Union and African regional organizations to develop their capabilities for peace-supporting operations.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the focus of Icelandic bilateral development cooperation, and we will continue to increase our contribution to and involvement in multilateral development cooperation.

Iceland welcomes the recent understanding among members of the World Trade Organization on a framework for the continuation of the Doha development round of negotiations on trade liberalization. The multilateral trading system is a proven vehicle for promoting economic development and growth, and it is central to the future prosperity of our nations. It is noteworthy that particular attention is paid to the needs of the least developed countries. It is important that they fully reap the benefits that the multilateral trading system has to offer. Iceland believes that the framework will give the negotiators in Geneva a new platform for the prompt conclusion of the Doha round. We want to do our part in making sure that globalization benefits all countries, not least through targeted development cooperation. In an effort to assist African countries in making the most of the Doha round, Iceland is participating, together with the other Nordic countries, in the Nordic Africa initiative.

Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), unanimously adopted on 6 June, provided for the restoration of sovereignty in Iraq. The resolution assigns the United Nations a leading role in helping to build a legitimate representative Government and democratic institutions. It also demonstrated the will of the Council — and indeed of the rest of the international community — to resolve past differences and to give first priority to the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq. My Government remains prepared to lend its support to the difficult work ahead in Iraq. In Iraq, as elsewhere, Iceland would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring the safety of United Nations missions.

Afghanistan will continue to occupy our attention in the coming months. The United Nations has done valuable work in registering some 10 million voters. The presidential elections on 9 October in Afghanistan will be an important milestone in the process of rebuilding the country. We must maintain an ongoing commitment to Afghanistan, where serious challenges to the rebuilding of the country continue to be faced. Iceland has demonstrated its support and has assumed the leading role in running the Kabul international airport, under the auspices of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.

An area of continuing concern is, of course, the Middle East. The Icelandic Government continues to call on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume negotiations on a political settlement. The road map sets out a realistic way to achieve a two-State solution. Iceland fully supports the efforts of the Quartet. We urge the Quartet and all other well-intentioned parties to continue to focus on this issue.

At the beginning of my remarks, I concentrated on terrorism. Terrorism is an assault on human rights. I would like to express strong support for the initiative of the Secretary-General urging Member States to ratify all those conventions that concern protection of the rights of the ordinary citizen.

In conducting the war against terrorism, we must protect the human rights that terrorists themselves flout. We must be sure that human rights and humanitarian law are not sacrificed. Here, I would like to refer to the key role played by the International Committee of the Red Cross — and by the entire Red Cross and Red Crescent movement — in monitoring the implementation of the Geneva Conventions, and at the same time to express my appreciation for that work.

During this session of the General Assembly, Iceland will continue to work to advance the issue of human rights. In that context, we look forward to marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and we urge those States that are not parties to accede to the Convention. Iceland will also continue to work with others to uproot racism and religious intolerance as a major way to prevent conflict and create a secure human environment.

Iceland is totally committed to the multilateral system, of which the United Nations is the fulcrum. Without an effective multilateral system, conflict and its causes will be much more difficult to address. But, in order to be effective, the system needs change. The Government of Iceland sincerely hopes that we can bring about necessary change during the next year, and we look forward to working with all Member States to that end.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Patricio Zuquilanda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Zuquilanda (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to represent the President of Ecuador, Mr. Lucio Gutiérrez Borbúa, and the people of Ecuador in this world forum of nations, to affirm once again that my country, Ecuador, is an ally of States committed to peace and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Ecuador is a law-abiding country, upholds the principle of international security and solidarity and is a staunch defender of all the mandates arising from the Charter of the United Nations.

It is worth highlighting once again that Ecuador, in its relations with the international community, opposes all forms of discrimination or segregation, colonialism or neocolonialism. On this occasion, the Government of Ecuador must once again ask the community of nations and the international financial organisms to not lose sight of the heavy burden on our countries represented by the service of the debt, which, year after year, severely strains our economies. The Ecuadorian Government calls on the United Nations to move forward with greater determination in identifying specific actions aimed at effectively reducing existing pressures, and, furthermore, in formulating proposals to efficiently address with this issue in the long term and enable our countries to develop.

The Government of Ecuador must also draw attention to one of the most momentous problems afflicting the international community, namely the protection of civilians in armed conflict. This terrible problem reflects a reality entirely at odds with the most elementary ethical and moral principles of human conduct and that destroys the basic premises of civilized co-existence, in which respect for life and the dignity of all individuals must necessarily be a priority.

It is time for the international community and the United Nations to give absolute priority to this issue and to find the political will and determination to tackle and eliminate every bloody and inhuman conflict in which international humanitarian law no longer prevails. The Security Council is duty-bound, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to reinforce the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, in order to avoid undermining the entire international juridical structure.

True to its international commitments and its humanitarian vocation, Ecuador has been welcoming thousands of refugees and immigrants from Colombia and other countries who have fled their countries because their lives, freedom and economic security have been threatened. We must remind the international community that, in order to solve this critical situation, we need the commitment of every country and international organism. For this reason, it is essential that in conformity with principles of shared responsibility and shared burdens, countries, such as Ecuador, which take in refugees and immigrants, should receive greater technical and economic support. This support is necessary to alleviate the social burden resulting from large numbers of persons entering local border communities, which experience higher levels of poverty and lack basic services.

With regard to the analysis of the northern border of Ecuador made by the United Nations inter-agency mission, we appreciate the support offered by the United Nations Secretary-General to implement the development proposals suggested in the report. Ecuador would also like to have the support of the international community and the international financial institutions in this undertaking.

The Government of Ecuador urges the international community to make good its commitment to the implementation of programmes established by Ecuador and Peru within the framework of the bi-national development plan for their common border, following the signing of the peace agreements in Brasilia in 1998. These projects aim at meeting the basic needs of the populations of the region, through social programmes and infrastructure projects. However, both Ecuador and Peru require the financial support of the countries that pledged their assistance for the post-conflict era.

To our countries' development problems we must add the persistent trade barriers which developed countries impose on our exportable products, as well as the subsidies worth millions that they grant to their own products, especially agricultural ones, which seriously limit normal competition among countries, increase unemployment and threaten the future of the education, health and well-being of our peoples.

Deteriorating conditions in developing countries have resulted in increased flows of migrants towards industrialized centres in search of employment, which is no longer available in their own countries. In some countries, this exodus has met with restrictive and unfair policies based on xenophobic concepts that, instead of providing a solution to the existing problem and to its root causes, make it even worse.

International migration is a problem that has grown more severe during the last decade. Each year, more countries are affected by migration movements, which are commanding increasing attention at the decision-making level. Migration reflects the human longing to have the opportunity to pursue a better quality of life and enjoy greater economic prospects. It also promotes exchange and understanding between peoples, strengthens dialogue and adds cultural and economic enrichment.

The history of humanity is inconceivable without constant migratory flows. It is evident, then, that the consequences of these migration movements have economic, political, social and demographic effects, as much for the countries of departure as for those of arrival. In this context, and in this current era of market globalization, emphasis must be placed on the liberalization of the supply of services via the free movement of persons.

Ecuador is strongly committed to cooperating in the search for solutions to this huge problem through a strict control of the illegal migration of persons and the elaboration of universal agreements that favour the development of human beings within their respective countries. However, to this end we require active cooperation between migrant source and recipient countries, as well as from international organizations.

My country has traditionally maintained a policy of promoting, respecting and protecting the human rights of migrants, and for this reason, from this General Assembly, I would like to appeal to all Governments and all sectors of society, particularly those of the developed world that receive migrant workers, to direct their efforts towards the protection of the rights of this vulnerable sector of society in a non-discriminatory manner, taking into consideration the highly positive and productive aspects of migration.

The territory of Ecuador is home to 12 nationalities and more than 17 ethnic groups. This diversity has been recognized in the Constitution of the Republic, which defines Ecuador as a social democracy that promotes the equitable distribution of welfare. The fundamental charter of the Ecuadorian State lays down a legal framework that promotes the participation of ethnic minorities in political structures and processes and guarantees the exercise of the constitutional rights of these groups in the public and private spheres.

The Government of my country cannot fail to mention that inequality has been, and continues to be, the greatest impediment to economic development and poverty alleviation in many developing countries. The disparity of wealth and income currently evident within and among many countries is a matter of concern for the international community. In order to prevent this inequality, we need to adopt effective multilateral measures aimed at effectively reducing poverty, which in itself constitutes an affront to human dignity and consequently harms the rights of individuals.

In this sense, it has become imperative that the intent of international summits addressing issues of development and poverty eradication become manifest through internal plans and programs based on enhanced international cooperation.

The Government of Ecuador supports these activities, which are embodied in three key areas: poverty reduction, political governance and transparency, and sustainable development through equitable access to natural resources. This commitment has led Ecuador to be chosen as an example for the implementation of innovative models, with the goal of optimizing the assistance and the quality of the country's response.

I believe it is essential that the voice of my country be heard on the topic of terrorism. This phenomenon has endangered the equilibrium, peace, harmony, and security of the planet. It has torn the socio-political fabric of societies, damaged financial structures and undermined the functioning of States' security apparatus.

I wish to reiterate the most unreserved support and backing of the Government of Ecuador for all initiatives and actions created to fight international terrorism in all its forms and characteristics, but always within the framework of the decisions of the United Nations, of international law and of absolute respect for human rights.

We must highlight the fact that hunger, ill health, poverty, great economic disparities, lack of respect for human rights, corruption, attempts to resolve disputes and conflicts by non-peaceful means and the growing weight of external debt are the seeds of international instability and insecurity; they undermine governance and are factors that destabilize democratic institutions. The international community must become fully aware of the fact that these harsh daily realities confronting developing countries also represent a threat to world security. Therefore, we must directly combat terrorism with a broad-based and concerted global strategy to foster development, improve the living conditions of a large part of the marginalized world population and encourage dialogue and tolerance, both between human beings and among States.

The international community needs to make the protection and security of individuals a global policy objective. The security of the State, of society and of individuals requires a consideration of the threats to their fundamental values, which are sovereignty, identity and survival. Only on that basis must we establish the parameters of political, economic and military action in a globalized world.

Ecuador, as a founding Member of the United Nations, resolutely supports the multilateral system, since it constitutes the best guarantee for the full operation of the purposes and principles that led to its creation and which are enshrined in its Charter. As a result, Ecuador fully supports the current process of reform of the United Nations, particularly of its main bodies, such as the Security Council, along with the revitalization of the General Assembly. We are convinced that that will contribute to more effective action in the fulfilment of its mission.

My country wishes to highlight the statement made here by the Prime Minister of Spain — his words of solidarity with the cause of Latin American peoples and his commitment to support the reduction of debt and of inequalities, as well as to promote and strengthen relations between the European Union and Latin America. Ecuador welcomes this expression of good will shown by Spain's Prime Minister, since achieving those goals will contribute to the welfare of the peoples.

Finally, democracy and respect for Governments legitimately established through popular vote are the greatest triumphs of Latin America in recent decades. No attempt whatsoever should be made to revise this basic principle of international policy, lest we seriously affect the system of normal coexistence among nations.

In conclusion, allow me to urge the international community to always bear in mind the precious ideals of human beings that inspire this Organization, as set forth in the Preamble to its Charter, which are the fundamental mandates for its Members and various bodies.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. João Bernardo de Miranda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. Miranda (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): I am overwhelmed with a great sense of joy at seeing Mr. Ping preside over the General Assembly at this fifty-ninth session. My first words are thus to convey to him, on behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, the most heartfelt congratulations upon his election. Our satisfaction springs from the great esteem in which the Angolan people hold your country and from the strong ties of friendship and fraternity that unite us.

I would also like to congratulate your predecessor for the dynamic manner in which he carried out his mandate.

At a time when the world is confronting the horrors of violence, poverty and hunger, the members of the Assembly once again have the difficult responsibility of assessing the implementation of their decisions and of seeking new solutions to problems that affect millions of human beings — solutions that will require a mechanism for international cooperation.

The United Nations must remain the pivotal instrument for States in dealing with new international challenges to peace and security, such as terrorism; hunger; poverty; violations of human rights that continue to deprive millions of human beings of their fundamental freedoms; the degradation of the environment; organized transnational crime, including drug trafficking; and HIV/AIDS.

The recent difficulties that the United Nations has confronted in dealing with situations that have seriously affected international security have exposed the limitations of its structure and its operation. The United Nations system must be urgently reformed and adapted to the demands and challenges of the current situation, which is characterized by globalization.

The main organs of the United Nations lack the broad democratic character that they need in order to express the will of the majority of the Members of the Organization. Both categories of membership of the Security Council should be expanded — on the basis of equitable geographical representation — so as to reflect the new international order.

In the past 50 years, humanity has made important advances in the areas of science and technology, economic development, medicine and other fields, which have resulted in improved living conditions and in an increase in the life expectancy of vast segments of the world's population, as well as in the growth of the world's material and even spiritual wealth.

However, while some countries and continents have shared in those gains, others continue to be marginalized — overwhelmed by economic setbacks that force a significant part of their population to live below the poverty line.

The aspirations of such people to a world of social justice and the full exercise of their economic and social rights, including the right to development, continue to be unfulfilled. In fact, the ranks of the poor have not stopped growing: since 1990, the number of poor people has been growing in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the recent summit on hunger and poverty, promoted by the President of Brazil, Lula da Silva, world leaders highlighted the dramatic situation of billions of human beings living mainly in developing countries who are suffering from hunger, malnutrition and diseases that are easily preventable.

This is a reprehensible picture, and we must therefore make the eradication of hunger and poverty a priority in our national policies and on the Organization's agenda. This dramatic situation could rapidly be reversed by a greater commitment on the part of the Governments of developing countries and a stronger political will on the part of the richest countries.

Furthermore, restrictions on international free trade have contributed to a deterioration in the living conditions of people in countries subjected to restrictive economic measures, as is the case in Cuba. We believe that such measures constitute an assault on moral and humanitarian principles.

In spite of the efforts made by developing nations to improve their economic performance and the well-being of their populations, the practical results do not measure up to the needs of the development process. This is partly the result of the imposition on developing countries of policies that do not take their realities into account.

Some institutions and rich countries are pressuring poor countries to follow the steps taken by industrialized countries during their economic development, alleging that developing countries will develop faster because of the benefits resulting from the implementation of policies that have in the past yielded positive results.

Such guidelines do not come close to meeting the development needs of poor countries. They fail to place an emphasis on training institutions at the local and national level; those institutions should, indeed, serve as levers for development.

Wealthy nations have a moral responsibility to foster a spirit of partnership, not of inequality and dependence, so as to contribute to the development of the less affluent countries and to the establishment of institutions capable of sustaining their integration into the global economy.

The existing economic disparities between the wealthy countries of the North and the developing countries of the South is not the result of choice on the part of the latter. The enrichment of the industrialized world has been achieved at the expense of the impoverishment of the Third World through the rampant exploitation of its natural resources and workforce and the imposition of a system of occupation and dominance.

Today, our countries and peoples are still suffering as a result of those policies of exploitation and subjugation, which in some cases have been worsened by internal conflicts that came about after the end of the period of foreign dominance.

It appears to us at times that the international financial institutions and the rich countries deliberately minimize those facts. From our point of view, the extensive hesitation with respect to financial assistance to developing countries is unjustified. Furthermore, some of the imposed preconditions seem to be a response more to political interests rather than to the requirements of sustainable economic development.

We had until recently called on this body and on the international community to support the restoration of peace in Angola. That long-sought peace has finally arrived and it has proved to be irreversible.

The success of the peace process ushered in a new phase: the laying of the political groundwork for the construction of a new society, one based on the rule of law, tolerance, a market economy, and the existence of a vibrant civil society. In addition to that political process, my Government is engaged in economic reform, which is a contributing factor to economic and social stability. Were it not for the tremendous, simultaneous challenges that we have had to face, that process could have been faster.

So far, the Angolan Government has been tackling alone the task of national reconstruction. That task involves the rehabilitation of social and productive infrastructures, which were almost totally destroyed by the armed conflict; the social reintegration of nearly 100,000 former combatants and their families; the resettlement of more than 4 million internally displaced persons and more than 400,000 refugees; and a far-reaching effort to reduce the poverty that afflicts most of the population. This very difficult task can be successful only with the full participation of the international community.

The reservations expressed by certain international donors in terms of providing assistance to Angola — overlooking the fact that the internal conflict was quite lengthy and destructive, that it absorbed a large part of the country's financial, human and materials resources, and that it disrupted the country — can be justified only by a lack of political will.

The reconstruction of Angola urgently requires partnerships and substantial support comparable to the assistance given to other countries in post-conflict situations.

As a country that is rejoicing in the peace and freedom for which it fought for 40 years, Angola is concerned with the instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country that shares an extensive land border with Angola, and with which we have fraternal ties. We were particularly shocked by the massacres of civilians in Gatumba. The perpetrators of that heinous act, who provoked a new escalation of violence in order to make the peace process unworkable, must be held judicially accountable. That act makes clear, inter alia, that, despite the significant efforts made in the context of the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the situation is still quite fragile.

The international community, particularly the Security Council and the African Union, must devote special and ongoing attention to this issue in order to avoid a collapse of the process.

In that context, subregional organizations, the countries of the region and other bodies involved in the pursuit of lasting peace in that country must cooperate, with a view to encouraging the Congolese parties to meet their commitments under the transitional process.

It is crucial that all the countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo reiterate their commitment to continue to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country and not to interfere in its internal affairs.

The Transitional Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo needs the support of the international community. My Government is willing, to the extent of its ability, to supply the necessary assistance in the process of the consolidation of peace and stability in that country.

The crisis in Darfur is a thorn in the international juridical conscience. Angola supports the decision of the Secretary-General to authorize an investigation. We hope that the authorities of the Sudan will fully cooperate with the African Union and the Security Council in their efforts to help bring peace to the people of that region. We believe that there now exists a solid basis for resolving that conflict.

Having in the past been a victim of terrorism, Angola cannot be indifferent to acts of terrorism, wherever they may happen. The acts of terrorism we have witnessed in recent times, and the vile and cruel form they have taken, should not discourage the efforts that the international community has been making to root out their perpetrators, but should instead increase its determination to isolate terrorist groups and stymie their efforts.

We believe, however, that we should reflect further on ways to prevent and combat terrorism. Have the methods used to date been effective in eradicating terrorism? Is the current system of collective security capable of coping with the aggressiveness of the terrorists? Would responses to terrorism based on the multilateral efforts of the United Nations be less effective?

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

I call on the representative of Haiti, who has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of Haiti.

Mr. Merores (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): In his statement before the General Assembly this morning, The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, presented an overview of the political situation in Haiti that, unfortunately, does not reflect the realities of my country.

As such, in accordance with rule 115 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, my delegation intends to exercise its right of reply to provide a better clarification, without entering into a useless debate with this sister nation of the Caribbean.

Prime Minister Gonsalves referred to an interruption of the democratic process in Haiti beginning on 28 February 2004. In that regard, I should draw to the Assembly's attention the fact that, following the presidential vacancy duly noted on 29 February 2004, and in conformity with article 149 of the Haitian Constitution of 1987, The Honourable Boniface Alexandre, in his capacity as President of the Supreme Court, was sworn in as interim President of the Republic.

Here, I should recall that that presidential vacancy had been created by the departure of former President Aristide, who, faced with the threat represented by — as he believed — his own supporters and a situation that he could no longer control, requested the assistance of a third nation to help him leave the country. The void thus created was duly noted by the United Nations and by the Organization of American States during discussions in which Saint Vincent and the Grenadines participated. And, in the light of that state of affairs, a consensus Government — whose formation saw the participation of all of the country's actors, including the supporters of the Lavalas party — was established, with the mandate of organizing free and credible elections in 2005.

Two days ago, before the Assembly, the Haitian head of State solemnly reiterated that commitment in the following terms:

> "The democratic process has begun. Political parties are forming, and others are re-organizing themselves. A constant and fruitful dialogue has begun between the authorities of the State, the political class and civil society organizations in the country." (*A/59/PV.6*)

Later in the same statement, he said:

> "General elections will be organized in 2005. The Government resolutely supports this process, and, on 7 February 2006, I must and will hand power over to a democratically elected President."

The Republic of Haiti has thus remained committed to Security Council resolutions 1529 (2004) and 1542 (2004), which created, respectively, the Multinational Interim Force and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). In our view, those texts better reflect Haitian realities and are useful tools to improve the lot of the Haitian people.

The provisional Government is deeply attached to the principles of respect for human rights and respect for human dignity, which are imperative in the functioning of any democratic State. The Government is working, with international cooperation, to strengthen State institutions, particularly the judicial system. Unfortunately, the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has portrayed the Haitian Government in a negative light following a popular verdict in which no member of the Government had to intervene and which was in conformity with the country's Constitution and laws.

I should like to recall that the judicial branch in Haiti is a State organ that acts completely independently of the executive branch. His Excellency the President of the Republic of Haiti clearly recalled that in the following terms:

> "The necessary reform of the Haitian judicial system is clearly an imperative. But it is fundamentally unjust to blame the present Government for brazen interference in judiciary proceedings or to systematically bleed magistrates and the civil servants in charge of establishing the law.
>
> "The Government of Haiti is extremely sensitive to the comments and remarks of its friends and partners with whom it is cooperating in all fields of political, economic and social governance; but it refuses to be associated with or connected to decisions that involve only one organ of the State, which acted completely independently, even if those decisions might raise certain questions." (*A/59/PV.6*)

Therefore, the Haitian Government deplores the statement of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which comes at a time when Haiti — working together with the international community, particularly MINUSTAH — has undertaken efforts to promote political stabilization and to provide assistance to the victims of the recent natural disaster that engulfed the country. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the many friendly countries and humanitarian organizations involved in that process. But we deeply regret this unfortunate statement, which could harm those efforts and could unfortunately be interpreted as an endorsement of the violence and insecurity that persist in certain areas of the country.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on a point of order.

Mr. Daniel (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): The delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would like to exercise its right to reply to the statement made by the previous speaker at a later date.

The meeting rose at 9.10 p.m.

United Nations A/59/PV.11

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Monday, 27 September 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping .... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Dato'Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

The Honourable Dato'Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Dato'Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Badawi (Malaysia): May I, as Prime Minister of Malaysia and in my capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and Chairman of the tenth Islamic Summit Conference, offer my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election as the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I am confident that with your wisdom, experience and diplomatic skill, you will steer the proceedings of the Assembly to a successful conclusion. I assure you of Malaysia's fullest cooperation. I strongly believe that the member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference would similarly render all their support and cooperation to you.

Allow me also to pay tribute to your distinguished predecessor, the Honourable Julian Robert Hunte of Saint Lucia. He discharged his responsibility with dedication and full commitment, in an efficient and effective manner. I commend especially his leadership in moving forward the process of revitalization of the General Assembly.

I wish to commend as well the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for their perseverance and relentless efforts in pursuit of the goals of the United Nations. In particular, I congratulate the Secretary-General for his initiatives to claim for the United Nations a more central role in the management of world affairs. I salute also the dedicated men and women of the United Nations who have sacrificed their lives in the service of humanity.

When we met last year at the Assembly's fifty-eighth session, we were deeply distressed that there was so much gloom in the international situation as a result of a breakdown in the multilateral negotiating processes. We were bitterly divided over the invasion of Iraq; there was great disappointment about the deadlock in the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Cancún, and we had to mourn the death of international civil servants who were killed during an act of terrorism against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Therefore, I consider it our solemn obligation at this fifty-ninth session to reaffirm the rightful role of the United Nations in the management of critical issues affecting international peace and security, and commit ourselves to abide by multilateralism in the quest for a more just and equitable international order. We must also take the necessary steps to ensure that never again should the United Nations be sidelined.

As the General Assembly is the most representative organ of the United Nations, we must dedicate ourselves to finding consensus on measures to revitalize the Assembly to fulfil its mandate in accordance with the Charter. We must build upon the work done in the fifty-eighth session. Again, we look towards the leadership of the Assembly President in that regard.

In that connection, the Malaysian delegation wishes to advocate that this fifty-ninth session of the Assembly accord high priority to ensuring that the United Nations regains its central role in social, economic and development issues. The United Nations — through an enhanced Economic and Social Council — should provide the impetus for the creation of an international economic system which better promotes the interests of developing countries. The United Nations must do more to realize all internationally agreed targets, particularly the Millennium Development Goals. As the eradication of poverty and hunger is fundamental to the achievement of those Goals, Malaysia fully appreciates the Brazilian initiative to create new and innovative forms of funding to meet those challenges.

We look forward to receiving the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, appointed by the Secretary-General last year. We believe the Secretary-General will make his own recommendations based on that report, and they should provide the basis for in-depth discussion among Member States in the months leading up to the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations.

This world body, the processes of multilateralism and, indeed, the entire international system must necessarily change. However, those changes must be effected without sacrificing certain immutable principles, such as sovereign equality, non-interference in the domestic affairs of States, peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for international law. What we do in that respect during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly will therefore be crucial.

Reform of the United Nations is a cause particularly dear to both the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. They look forward to working closely with you, Mr. President, as well as with other Members of the United Nations and the Secretary-General on this matter.

Most immediately, we must find ways and means to let the United Nations assume its proper role in combating international terrorism. Malaysia is convinced that the fight against terrorism cannot succeed through the force of arms alone. To win it, we need to exert genuine efforts and demonstrate good faith to address the root causes of terrorism, one of the most obvious of which is the unfulfilled dreams of peoples struggling for independence and aspiring to sovereign States of their own. To find the answers, we must promote genuine dialogue and rid ourselves of the prejudices and bigotry triggered by the events of 11 September and further aggravated by subsequent events. The United Nations is clearly the best forum for such a dialogue to take place without malice, in a shared environment that is devoted to finding peace among nations and building friendship between peoples. The United Nations can facilitate the convening of a special international conference to consider the question in all its aspects, including the root causes of terrorism and the issue of State-sponsored terrorism.

One of the most important aspects to be addressed by such a dialogue is the necessity to inculcate a frank appreciation, understanding and acceptance of different civilizations and cultures, including religions. There is an urgent need to stop tarnishing the Muslim world with unfair stereotypes. We must cease associating Islam with violence, poverty and indignity. In reality, the troubles have nothing to do with Islam; nor are the problems exclusively associated with Muslims. We need to clear the confusion that links the problems faced by some Muslim countries with the religion of Islam.

We also note with great concern the increasing tendency to link the fight against terrorism with the campaign against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Developing countries suffer as a result of restrictions imposed on their access for peaceful uses to the technology, equipment and material necessary for their economic development. Malaysia is fully and firmly committed to the cause of non-proliferation, but there must be multilateral negotiations for universal, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreements and arrangements. Above all, nothing should be done at the expense of the resources needed for the international development agenda.

Most damaging of all is the increasing tendency to attribute linkages between international terrorism and Islam. The time has indeed arrived for us to debunk, once and for all, the theory that there is a clash of civilizations. I speak from the experience of my own country, Malaysia, where we have shown that Islam is not an impediment to modernity and to democracy. It is not an impediment to rapid economic growth, to self-respect and confidence, to tolerance and mutual respect across religions, cultures and ethnic groups. In Malaysia, we celebrate the multi-ethnicity of our people, of Malaysians. For us, our multi-ethnic and cultural diversity is a national asset. It has taught us to be tolerant, value mutual respect and cooperate for the common good. We sincerely believe that this message deserves a wider audience.

I am certain that the Organization of the Islamic Conference would be supportive of a dialogue designed to create greater understanding between peoples and civilizations and that would lead to real action and effect changes at the societal level. The Non-Aligned Movement, too, would be equally keen to support initiatives that would have the effect of establishing harmony and restoring stability in the world.

Since the stability of many nation-States continues to be threatened, especially by armed conflicts, there is a critical need, more than ever, for Members of the United Nations to unite and close ranks to put a stop to such conflicts, be they inter-State or intra-State.

Iraq is still in turmoil. Although Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) of 8 June 2004 enabled the return of sovereignty to the people of Iraq, the unrelenting conflict continues in that country. The same resolution also renewed the mandate of the multinational force, but the reality on the ground suggests that the existing arrangements cannot stabilize the situation there.

The situation in Iraq clearly calls for the United Nations to be given the lead role, particularly in establishing stability in preparation for the elections scheduled for January 2005. Orderly elections are critical to the process of re-establishing a truly independent and sovereign Government in Iraq.

The United Nations also has the best credentials to enable Member States to take part in peace-building and in the reconstruction of Iraq. The international community owes it to the people of Iraq to summon its collective resolve and political will to allow all of that to happen. If we collectively succeed in assisting Iraq to seize the moment, we would also succeed at the same time in bringing a closure to the bitter divisiveness which was brought about, in the beginning, by unilateralism over that same issue.

While the precarious situation in Iraq cries out for United Nations action, the plight and suffering of the people of Palestine remains a tragic embodiment of the consequences of non-implementation of United Nations resolutions and the non-enforcement of United Nations decisions. We must actively revive the road map for peace in the Middle East, which remains unimplemented. The Quartet needs to play a more vigorous role. The international community must lend its full weight to push for an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and with Israel and Palestine living peacefully, side by side within secure and recognized borders.

To create an environment of confidence for the speedy resuscitation of the road map, we must seriously consider approving the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force or the deployment of an international monitoring mechanism to oversee the implementation of the road map for peace in the Middle East.

We must also find ways to give effect to the historic advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory. In October last year, the General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution demanding that Israel stop and reverse construction of the wall built in the West Bank. It is unacceptable that a multilateral resolution giving effect to the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion cannot be effectively implemented. Clearly, the search for peace and security also depends on our willingness and determination to ensure its enforceability.

I strongly believe that multilateralism is the only approach for implementing resolutions and decisions concerning global peace and security. Adherence to the Charter of the United Nations should be a solemn obligation, not a matter of choice. For Malaysia, the United Nations is crucial as the guarantor of the sanctity of our existence as a sovereign nation and as the institution where the principles of international law are protected and safeguarded. Small nations such as Malaysia do not have the military and other means to insulate themselves from invasion or occupation by big Powers. But no sovereign nation should ever be subjected to the threat of military action by another. No international intervention should ever be undertaken unless consistent with the United Nations Charter. If the law of the jungle were to prevail, the small and the weak would certainly perish.

In this matter, no one should ever lose sight of the fact that when the defence of the nation-State is called for, it is actually the well-being of the State's people that is at stake. The world must take special note of this and give due recognition to the voices and the contributions of global civil society in matters affecting international peace and security.

To foster genuine peace and security, the world naturally looks to the big Powers for leadership. A sincere commitment to multilateralism on the part of the big Powers will send a strong signal to all nations, large and small, that the purposes and principles of the United Nations shall form the basis of the conduct of relations between nations. Such a commitment will also provide the foundation for a true international partnership, not only for establishing global peace and security but also for achieving international economic and social development. Of course, multilateralism can be sustained only if it embraces all nations as important stakeholders and excludes none.

Therefore, urgent steps must be taken to make multilateral processes relevant and effective. To begin, the principal organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, should be rendered more democratic and more representative of the number and geographical distribution of its international membership. The exercise of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council should be regulated in order to prohibit that power from being used at the sole discretion of its holder. It is unjust that any single country should be allowed the impunity of overruling at will the wish of the majority. That injustice can be rectified, for example, by enabling certain types of General Assembly resolutions to overrule a Security Council veto.

We must find a comprehensive and just solution to the problem of Palestine. We must allow the United Nations to take the lead role in stabilizing the situation in Iraq. We need to address seriously and resolutely the scourge of international terrorism, the elimination of global poverty, the proliferation of transnational crimes, the destruction of the environment and the spread of the AIDS epidemic, as well as the economic and social advancement of all humankind. The global economic order, especially in the sphere of international finance, must be made more fair and equitable. The way forward and our best hope lie in universal commitment now to multilateralism.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Malaysia for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Dato'Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Shara' (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that your wisdom, drawn from the positions of your friendly country of Gabon, will stand you in good stead in promoting dialogue among the peoples and the countries of the world, in invigorating the role of the United Nations and in preserving its Charter.

I also express my appreciation, Sir, to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his efforts to bring the previous session to a successful conclusion.

I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his patience and efforts to make the voice of the United Nations heard in a precarious international situation, amid volatile regional conditions, in which force is preferred to law, wrong preferred to right and war preferred to peace. Our world has been going through extremely difficult times since 11 September 2001. That is particularly true of the United States and the Middle East. The

United Nations could have very well shared the fate of the League of Nations in the 1930s, although very little thought was given to the dire consequences that such a development would have entailed, given the absence of other alternatives.

It is no exaggeration to argue that the major challenges today to the questions of peace, security and development stem not only from failing to heed the United Nations Charter but also from manipulating some of its Articles to greatly disrupt and derail international relations and to deliberately upset the international equilibrium that we inherited from the cold war era.

Thus, it becomes clear that the surge in extremism, the diversity of its causes and manifestations and the spread of poverty and hunger across large parts of the world are not the concern of only one country, one people or one religion, but, rather, of all peoples, countries and religions of the world.

It is also clear that this deteriorating situation, which the international community acknowledges but has failed to strive in earnest to remedy, will not serve anyone in particular. This is all the more true now that the justifications of the cold war era, with its enormous expenses on armaments, can no longer be invoked and that pre-emptive wars, with the great losses in life and property they entail, have proven useless. The mistakes committed during the world war on terror, regardless of whether they were committed in good faith or in bad faith, have worked as a call to promote and practice terrorism, which has been embraced by an enemy whose whereabouts we do not know. This enemy is committing acts so horrific that they remind us of the Middle Ages.

In this context, the peoples of the developing countries are wondering why hundreds of fighter jets and thousands of soldiers would be hauled across the continents and why billions of dollars would be spent to bring about a regime change in certain countries when those resources could have been channelled — even partially — into financing education and development projects in those same countries? When reform becomes a national and an international demand, how can we justify to those seeking reform the fact that the movers and the shakers of the world chose to impose sanctions instead of investing in peace and prosperity and chose to spend billions on war instead of opting for the road that would surely lead to reform and progress? Is it possible to prove that throughout history military solutions, and not political or economic solutions, have been more effective tools for reform and progress and for saving the lives of millions of people plagued by injustice, poverty and disease? At any rate, while political solutions may not necessarily guarantee full success, military solutions are definitely a recipe for failure.

Moreover, while such an argument may sound idealistic, there can be no alternative to political solutions. The current international dilemma is exacerbated by military solutions. There are many examples to prove that argument. We can cite, by way of example, the situations in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places.

Left alone, that dilemma will not be solved. It can only be solved if the leaders of the world work in earnest and evince the necessary political will to restore credibility to the United Nations and guarantee respect for international legitimacy through their commitment to United Nations resolutions that are based on the principles and purposes of the Charter. Justice and equality, it must be recalled, are at the core of the Charter of this Organization.

The peoples of the world were optimistic about the great strides that were made in science and technology and the collective and individual achievements that spanned all fields of human endeavour in the past two decades. They aspired to a globalization with a human face that was based on a dialogue among civilizations, and synergies with other cultures, that would keep the spectre of cold and hot wars at bay. However, some power circles attempted to exploit those great human achievements to further their own narrow interests. They devised new colonialist policies that disappointed the peoples of the world and turned back the clock.

At the speed of light, the world forgot about the surge of optimism that overwhelmed many of the world's leaders as they addressed this Assembly four years ago when they celebrated the third Millennium. Today, a wave of pessimism has taken over the world because of extremist and intolerant policies advanced by some strategic think-tanks that were determined to find a new enemy, under any pretext, after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Israel has contributed to the creation of many of those flimsy pretexts. It has packaged them with great care, breathed life into many of them, and distributed them among the delegations that owe allegiance to it. It was hoping to achieve the following: first, to incite the Americans in particular and the West in general to wage endless wars in the Middle East, in order to underscore the old-new theory of Israel that the Arab-Israeli conflict is not the core of the problems of the region. To prove our point we refer to the argument promoted by Israel that the situation in Iraq and its repercussions are more dangerous and complicated than that prevailing in the occupied Arab territories and Palestine. Sharon is trying to mislead world public opinion into believing that achieving peace would require only the dismantling of some Jewish settler outposts in Gaza, not withdrawal from the West Bank and the occupied Palestinian territories, let alone withdrawal from East Jerusalem and accepting a just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees.

Secondly, Israel hoped to divert the attention of the world and camouflage the settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories that have continued unabated, while continuing to build the racist segregation wall and lessening the importance of State terror perpetrated by Israel on a daily basis. Israel has repackaged its policies as an act of self-defence that does not warrant condemnation and denunciation even though it targets innocent civilians.

But Israel has not fully succeeded in realizing its goals, and even where it has, that success will be short-lived because Israel has in recent years transformed its regular army into gangs bent on committing systematic killings and war crimes against Palestinian civilians, all perpetrated in the territories it occupies in the West Bank and Gaza. Killing the Palestinians often occurs in the course of house demolitions that terrorize their wretched occupants, who frequently look death in the eye.

All this notwithstanding, the defenceless Palestinians have stayed the course and refused to surrender or leave. Israel bears an important share of the responsibility for the intensification and worsening of the American predicament in Iraq by avoiding the resumption of the peace process despite the hand extended to it in peace by the Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese.

I must repeat that Israel bears an important share of the responsibility for the intensification and worsening of the American predicament in Iraq owing to its failure to resume the peace process. The Israeli course of action may come back to haunt it because its continued occupation of the Arab lands is a major cause of the rejection of American policies in the broader Middle East.

That is also true in Europe where polls conducted a year ago showed that most of the citizens of the European Union believe that Israel poses a threat to international peace.

Among the strategic mistakes committed by the think-tanks and research centres that owe their allegiance to Israel is to mislead the Israelis into believing that the new Iraq will hasten to conclude peace agreements with Israel and establish diplomatic relations with it before it withdraws from the occupied Arab territories. They ignored the fact that the Iraqis refused to adopt the new flag that was designed for their country after the war simply because its colours somehow bear resemblance to the Israeli flag.

The deteriorating situation in Iraq remains a source of great concern for my country and other countries in the region and the world. That state of affairs should prompt all of us to mobilize all efforts to win the battle for peace in post-war Iraq.

Syria, a neighbouring country directly concerned with events in Iraq — given our historic and geographical ties as well as our common national bonds with the Iraqi people — has spared no effort to guarantee Iraq's stability, security, independence, territorial integrity and the unity of its people. We stand ready to cooperate with the neighbouring countries and all the parties concerned, including the United Nations, to enable the Iraqi people to govern themselves, manage their resources and establish optimal relations with their neighbours.

Syria has repeatedly declared its commitment to a just and comprehensive peace. We continue to call for the withdrawal of Israel from all the Arab territories occupied in 1967, for guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, namely, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative endorsed by the Beirut summit of 2002.

That was the basis of Syria's serious engagement in the peace negotiations for over a decade. The literature published on the subject recently in the United States and Israel bears witness to the seriousness with which Syria approached those negotiations. What the peace process lacks today is a strategic Israeli decision comparable to the Syrian decision to achieve peace in the region.

It was rather disparaging that the Foreign Minister of Israel used this rostrum of international legitimacy to ignore the facts and selectively refer to a resolution recently adopted by the Security Council on Lebanon. Israel violates Lebanese airspace, territorial waters, land borders and sovereignty on a daily basis and continues to occupy parts of Lebanese territory.

The representative of Israel tried, in vain, to misguide the international community. The world community today bears witness to Israel's persistent non-compliance with 40 Security Council and 600 General Assembly resolutions, all of which call upon Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories so that a just and comprehensive peace can be established in the region. Soon after the adoption of every resolution Israel would reject it, levelling accusations and heaping insults on the Organization. It has refused to allow entry to members of fact-finding missions, and has even harassed them. Given all those facts, does anyone have the right to ask whether the statements by the representative of Israel mark the beginning of a radical change in the position of his Government, perhaps indicating the pursuit of a policy that respects international legitimacy and is committed to compliance with its resolutions?

For centuries our region has endured more foreign threats and onslaughts, acts of aggression, misrepresentations of facts and use of force against our peoples than any other region. Its potential has been wasted and its material and intellectual resources squandered, thus preventing it from attaining its development goals and advancing its capacities. The Middle East suffers an explosive situation brought about by Israeli's expansionist policies, continued occupation and virtual sabotage of any chance for peace in the region. Furthermore, Israel's acquisition of a nuclear arsenal constitutes a major destabilizing factor in the Middle East region that threatens the future of its peoples.

Syria was among the first countries of the region to call for declaring the Middle East region a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. We have seriously worked to attain that objective. We have joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and concluded a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We have also contributed to numerous initiatives to attain that goal, most recently through the draft resolution we submitted on behalf of the Arab Group to the Security Council on 29 December 2003 (see A/58/667, annex). The draft resolution called for the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East region, in particular nuclear weapons, in the context of a collective international monitoring regime under United Nations supervision, which would enhance the role of multilateral international disarmament conventions.

International terrorism is a cause for concern for us all. Together we should work to eradicate that dangerous phenomenon by addressing its root causes. It is on this basis that Syria has condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We condemn the kidnapping and killing of innocent people and the targeting of civilians, government institutions, humanitarian agencies, religious establishments, international organizations and diplomatic missions.

In that context, we reiterate our condemnation of the heinous terrorist act that killed innocent children in a school in Beslan, Russia. We also call on the international community to condemn the systematic State terror perpetrated by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories against the defenceless Palestinian people, as well as the many massacres perpetrated by Israeli occupation forces, in which innocent children, women and the elderly are killed.

During its tenure on the Security Council, Syria strove to support the Council's efforts to combat international terrorism. It has acceded to most of the international counter-terrorism conventions as well as to the Arab and Organization of the Islamic Conference anti-terrorism conventions. The two latter conventions define crimes of terrorism and distinguish between terrorism and the legitimate right of occupied peoples to resist occupation in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter.

My country is following with great concern the developments in the brotherly Sudan. That concern stems primarily from our commitment to the territorial integrity of the Sudan and the unity of its people. We view with satisfaction the positions and measures adopted by the Government of the Sudan to address the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. We believe that the League of Arab States and the African Union can play an important role in the settlement of the crisis.

Syria welcomes the increased role of the African Union in seeking effective solutions to the major issues facing the countries and the peoples of Africa. We believe that the African Union's conflict settlement mechanisms, including its Peace and Security Council, will strengthen the role of that important continent and its ability to face the challenges of peace and development.

In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders underscored the need to create an environment favourable to development and to eradicate poverty at the national and global levels. Have we acted upon those commitments? How far have we gone on the road towards implementation of the Millennium Development Goals? Have we taken the necessary steps and cooperated far enough to give the necessary impetus to efforts towards progress in the entire developing world?

Development is a human right to which every human being is entitled. It is not an exclusive privilege available to one side to the detriment of the other, regardless of the disparities between them. That right should be accorded priority status on our agenda, and it must not be manipulated for political gains.

It is heartening to note that some enlightened leaders have taken it upon themselves to shed light on two of the most critical problems of our world: poverty and hunger. In launching the Action Against Hunger and Poverty, they proposed practical collective solutions to preserve man's dignity. Syria welcomes the Declaration issued by the world leaders in response to the initiative of the Brazilian President to discuss that question.

Syria has effectively contributed to the debate on the reform of the United Nations system, the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council and the increase of its membership. Syria hopes that, at this session, the Assembly will continue to address the urgent questions of peace and development so that a broad consensus will emerge and coordinated measures will be adopted towards resolving those questions. The prime objective of reforming the United Nations is to enhance its ability to face the new threats and challenges. However, reform should be built on commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter.

Syria is following with keen interest the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change appointed by the Secretary-General to review current and future threats to international peace and security and the current state of affairs of the main organs of the United Nations, with a view to submitting proposals on enhancing their roles. Syria will be participating in the deliberations among Member States on the proposals and opinions of the Panel.

As we have made clear in past years, Syria supports reforming the Security Council and increasing its membership. In our view, that reform should be based on the principles of universality, effectiveness, democratic participation and geographical representation, particularly of developing countries. Syria has consistently stressed the importance of assigning a permanent seat on the Security Council to the Arab States, to be allocated by rotation among the Member States in accordance with the procedures of the League of Arab States.

Since its establishment, the United Nations has successfully overcome many acute regional and international crises. Its Charter has had to coexist with some of those crises. At times, the United Nations has dealt with those crises successfully. At other times, it has skirted them without actually coming to grips with them. A case in point is the Palestinian question, which is as old as the United Nations itself. The Arab-Israeli conflict still rages in spite of the fact that the United Nations has adopted more than 600 resolutions on the subject. Israel, however, has not implemented a single one of these resolutions and continues to find protection both inside and outside the United Nations.

A lot has been said about establishing a greater Middle East. We are convinced that success in achieving that will remain elusive unless the relevant resolutions are implemented and peace is restored, in accordance with the aspirations of the people of the region and the world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Li Zhaoxing, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I offer my warm congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I am confident that under your presidency fruitful results will be achieved. I also wish to pay a cordial tribute to Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, and to Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The recent appalling terror in Beslan, Russia, caused massive casualties, including many children. On behalf of the Chinese Government, I strongly condemn, once again, that inhuman act of terrorist violence and extend our deep condolences to the families of the victims.

Peace and development remain the dominant themes in today's world. Multipolarization and economic globalization are moving forward in twists and turns. Science and technology are advancing at a dizzying speed. Forces that make for peace and factors that lead to war are both on the rise. Human society is moving in a bright, progressive and positive direction.

However, the light of peace has not fallen on every corner of the globe, nor has development reached every inch of the Earth. Threats to security, both traditional and non-traditional, are intertwined. The dark cloud of war remains menacing. Hot spots keep springing up. Terrorist activities are raging, and cross-border problems such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, transnational crime and illegal immigration are erupting one after another. Factors of uncertainty, instability and unpredictability are increasing.

In the course of economic globalization, the gap between the North and the South is widening. Developing countries are confronting new difficulties and challenges as a growing number of them are further marginalized. Today, half the global population lives on less than $2 a day, and of those, 1.2 billion live on less than $1 a day. Much remains to be done to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

Peace, development and cooperation are the prerequisites for our times. People all over the world are raising their voice in favour of peace, development and cooperation and against war, poverty and confrontation. Peace is the precondition for human development and prosperity. Without a peaceful and stable international environment, development is out of the question for any country. A chaotic world benefits no one. Having experienced the scourge of two world wars, mankind would not tolerate any more war or bloodshed. Thus it is the fervent aspiration of all peoples to live and achieve development in a secure and stable environment.

In tackling security issues, it is imperative to foster a new security concept of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. This new concept calls for nations to transcend their differences in ideology and social systems, respect one another's security interests, promote greater democracy in international relations and seek peaceful solutions to disputes through dialogue.

Terrorism is the common enemy of the whole world. China stands firmly opposed to terrorism in all forms and manifestations. To prevent and fight terrorism, we must intensify international cooperation and address both the causes and symptoms of the threat. Only when the root causes of terrorism are eradicated can peoples live in peace and tranquillity again.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction poses a threat to world peace and security. Non-proliferation efforts therefore require the participation of all members of the international community. Likewise, it is important to discard unilateralism and double standards and to give full credit and full latitude to the role of the United Nations.

China takes an active part in multilateral non-proliferation efforts and firmly defends the international regime of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. China believes that multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes can be steadily promoted in order to further improve the international non-proliferation regime.

There is still a long way to go before peace and reconstruction can be realized in Iraq. We support an important role for the United Nations in Iraq's political process, helping that country achieve the smooth holding of elections.

We appeal to Palestine and Israel to resume dialogue as soon as possible and to start implementing the Middle East road map faithfully. As always, China will work to resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula through dialogue and talks, in the interest of peace and stability on the Peninsula.

Development is the foundation for human progress. Lasting peace and stability throughout the world depends on coordinated, balanced and universal development. Development is of overriding importance. Living in peace, abundance and harmony between nations has been the dream of many generations. Coordinated, balanced and sustainable development serves the fundamental interests of all peoples and works for their well-being.

In order to promote economic growth worldwide, it is necessary for the international community to take effective measures to put in place an open and fair multilateral trading regime and gradually improve it. It is also important to reform and improve the international financial system.

The developed countries must honour their commitments to debt reduction, technology transfer and market access through concrete actions in order to enable developing countries to really benefit from globalization. The developing countries, for their part, need to work together to attain development and take part in a wide range of international efforts. They should also deepen South-South cooperation.

We, the members of the international community, should join hands in working for a just and equitable new international economic order that meets the needs of the growing economic globalization and serves the common interests of all countries.

The Millennium Development Goals are our solemn, collective pledge. The United Nations should further mobilize resources, strengthen coordination and increase its input to development activities in order to help Member States achieve these important goals as scheduled.

Cooperation is an effective way of dealing with the collective challenges facing humankind. To strengthen international cooperation, we must champion multilateralism. The United Nations is the centre of the international multilateral system and the key platform for making multilateralism work. It is the widespread desire of the international community to adhere to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, take more collective actions, strengthen the role of the United Nations and safeguard its authority.

The threats and challenges we face make it imperative to strengthen, rather than weaken, the role of the United Nations. A stronger United Nations is indispensable for maintaining global peace and stability and promoting the common development of humankind. All Member States should honour their commitments to the Charter of the United Nations and fulfil their international responsibilities and obligations.

The world is eagerly looking forward to a dynamic and action-oriented United Nations. China supports necessary and rational reforms of the Organization. Such reforms should aim at enhancing the leading role of the United Nations in international affairs, reinforcing its capacity to tackle new threats and challenges, and ensuring that better reflects the aspirations and needs of the vast majority of developing countries.

China is in favour of expanding the Security Council and of giving priority to greater representation of the developing countries. China also supports the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and it is looking forward to the Panel's report by the end of this year, so that it can be reviewed by Member States.

China is a staunch force working for world peace, common development and international cooperation. After over half a century of strenuous efforts and more than two decades of reform and opening up, China has now entered a new stage of development aimed at building a moderately prosperous society all-round. However, China is still a developing country, and a large population and inadequate economic development remain its basic national conditions. It has a long way to go before achieving its development goals.

The Chinese Government will always place development at the top of its agenda. The fact that China — a large, developing country with 1.3 billion people — runs its own affairs well is in itself a major contribution to peace and to the development of humanity.

China desires peace, development and cooperation, and strives to win peace and development through cooperation. It is working to promote democracy in international relations, diversity in its modes of development and richness in the world's civilizations. It advocates a new security concept and facilitates the establishment of a fair and equitable new international order.

China will pursue with determination an independent foreign policy of peace, adhere to the five principles for Peaceful Coexistence, and engage in mutually beneficial and friendly cooperation with other countries on an equal footing.

China will unswervingly safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity, brook no interference in its internal affairs by foreign forces and, at the same time, respect other countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity.

China remains committed to the common interests of humankind. China's national interests, in the final analysis, are consistent with the common interests of all humankind. In handling State-to-State relations, China will safeguard its own interests while taking into account the interests of other countries. China will adhere to the policy of opening up, and develop economic relations and trade with all other nations on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

China's development stands in the way of no one, nor does it pose any threat to others. China is following the path of peaceful development, seeking an international environment of peace and stability for its own development and promoting world peace and progress through its own prosperity.

China is working steadily to develop its relations with the world's major countries. It will stay committed to the policy of building friendship and partnership with its neighbours and combine stronger bilateral friendships with enhanced regional cooperation. It will strengthen solidarity and cooperation with other developing countries and support any justified demands or legitimate propositions on their part in international affairs. It will play a constructive role in the political, economic, social, disarmament, arms control and other multilateral fields; safeguard the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the universally recognized norms governing international relations; and support any consensus that serves the common interests of all countries.

Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory. Safeguarding China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and realizing complete national reunification at an early date is the common will and firm resolve of the 1.3 billion Chinese people. Pursuing the policy of "peaceful reunification and one country, two systems", the Chinese Government is ready to work tirelessly towards a peaceful reunification with the utmost sincerity. We, more than anyone else, want to see a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question. But we will never tolerate Taiwan independence, nor will we allow anyone to separate Taiwan from the rest of China in any way.

We hope that the international community will fully recognize the complex and sensitive nature of the current situation across the Taiwan Strait and the serious threat posed by the separatist activities of the Taiwan authorities to the stability of the Taiwan Strait and the peace of the Asia-Pacific region. We expect the Assembly to continue supporting the Chinese Government's efforts for peaceful reunification and to join us in containing pro-independence activities, in the interest of stability in the Strait and of world peace.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. As the basic guidelines for State-to-State relations, the Five Principles have withstood the test of half a century and remain an irrefutable truth. The Five Principles, which include peace, development and cooperation, are consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. They provide guidance for the establishment and development of relations between countries with identical or different social systems; point to the correct path towards the peaceful settlement of outstanding issues between countries and international disputes; firmly defend the interests of the developing countries; and facilitate the improvement and development of North-South relations. The Five Principles present important ideas that must underpin the establishment of a fair and equitable new international order.

China not only initiated, but has faithfully observed, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Given the new realities of today, we will continue to champion those Principles and join all the peoples of the world in advancing the lofty cause of peace, development and cooperation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hassan Wirajuda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mr. Wirajuda (Indonesia): I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. May I also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte of Saint Lucia, for having ably presided over our deliberations during the previous session of the General Assembly.

Even as I speak, a magnificent transformation is being completed on the other side of the globe — in my country. Many of us in Indonesia have waited all our lives to witness this historic event: our people finally rising to take their destiny into their own hands.

Exactly a week ago, some 125 million men and women trooped to the polling stations and chose the President and Vice-President who will govern in the name of 230 million Indonesians. That was the third national political exercise that we had to carry out — not just once, but three times — in a period of six months, the previous two being the parliamentary elections and the first round of the presidential elections. All of them were peaceful, fair and democratic.

Each of them was an enormous operation, covering some 6,000 islands in an archipelago with an expanse as wide as Europe's, and involving millions of election workers attending to some 575,000 polling stations. As we coped with the massive logistical requirements of that undertaking, we were extended support and assistance by the United Nations and friendly countries. We are grateful for this.

It will be some time before the official results of the vote are in. But whoever the new national leaders of Indonesia may be, they will have a clear and strong mandate from the people — not from the elite, not from the party bosses, nor from power brokers or vested interests — but from the people. This is the climax of a transition from authoritarian rule to a full-fledged democracy, a process that began six years ago in the crucible of the Asian crisis, which devastated our economy and mangled our socio-political system. We have thus become the full-fledged democracy that the founding fathers of our Republic long ago envisioned.

This need for political reform is also felt by other nations. The Emir of Qatar, speaking as Chairman of the Group of 77, told this Assembly at its 3rd meeting,

> "Political reform and people's participation in decision-making are no longer an option but have become a definite necessity".

Hence, we are proud of this democracy of ours. It is the fulfilment of a universal human aspiration, and yet it is unique to us. It sprang from our native soil, a true child of our culture. It was not imposed from outside, at gunpoint. And it put to rest the debate on whether Islam and democracy can ever mix.

As the country with the largest Muslim population, Indonesia has proven that Islam can be a bastion of democracy and social justice. Indeed, our deep sense of spirituality inspired our people to resoundingly reject money politics, corruption, terrorism and all forms of extremism. It was also our beacon towards reform; and reform has worked for us. Although the Asian crisis instantly doubled the number of Indonesians living below the poverty line, we have since been able to reduce the poverty rate to its pre-crisis level. We did this by shifting from a Government-driven poverty-reduction strategy to one of community empowerment. This effort required funding of more than US$1 billion, making it one of the largest such programmes in the world.

Through fiscal controls that dramatically lowered inflation, we stabilized the prices of essential goods. Through social safety net programmes, we helped the poor to weather the crisis. By doing this, we denied the terrorists what could have been a dangerous mass base.

Since then, consumer confidence has led our economic growth. With political fears allayed and investor confidence boosted, we look forward to 4.8 per cent growth this year, and 5.5 per cent next year. We can now wage a stronger battle against poverty.

By consolidating our efforts to promote the rule of law, greater respect for human rights and effective regional autonomy as the main pillars of our reform, we are confident that we can overcome threats to our national unity and security, including communal violence, separatism and terrorism.

We continue to strengthen our relations with all our neighbours. We have made a fresh start with Timor-Leste, and we are building a strong relationship.

We look forward to a future of bilateral peace, friendship and cooperation.

This does not mean that we have solved all our problems. We still have to make democracy work for us some more and to keep it working. This is what 230 million Indonesians devoutly wish, and they deserve no less. Moreover, no democracy is safe without being assured of a democratic environment at the global level. That environment cannot be created by unilateral action, no matter how mighty and well-intended.

At the global level, democracy can be promoted only by democratic means, through multilateral institutions like the United Nations. If, as its detractors say, the United Nations is not an effective tool of collective security and development, this is only because it has been denied the support that it deserves from its strongest and most influential Members.

But we need the United Nations to give legitimacy to the necessary use of force in the cause of collective security. And even the wealthiest nations in the world cannot bear all the costs of global security. The privilege and burden of decision-making must be shared by all.

Hence, we must empower the United Nations to serve as the effective tool of multilateralism that it was always meant to be. We must reform the United Nations comprehensively, including the Security Council, by making it more democratic, in terms of procedure and representation, in order to reflect today's geographical realities.

In this regard, it may be recalled that Australia last year proposed the inclusion of Indonesia as a permanent member on the Council. We appreciate Australia's position. It has greatly encouraged us. As the world's third largest pluralistic democracy, the fourth most populous country, the world's largest Muslim nation, a country of tremendous cultural diversity and a member with a track record of serving in various peace initiatives of the United Nations, Indonesia has an important global constituency on the Council.

Indonesia has served in more than 30 peacekeeping missions, starting with the very first, in the Middle East in 1957. Today, Indonesian soldiers and military observers are deployed in peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Georgia. As a founding member and active player of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77, the Group of 15, the Developing Eight and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, our commitment to the promotion of international peace and understanding is self-evident.

Indonesia has made key contributions to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in its region, notably in Cambodia and southern Philippines. It continues to actively build peace and stability in the region.

A developing world striving not only for social and economic progress but also for democratization must have a voice on the Security Council. Moderate Islam must have a voice on the Council. Indonesia would be that voice. And that voice will insist — as we now insist — that the fight against terrorism, like the related fight against poverty, can be won. This is not to deny that terrorists are still capable of wreaking havoc on our societies. Just two weeks ago, they struck again in the heart of Jakarta, killing nine innocent civilians and wounding 150 others. We in Indonesia condemn this act of inhuman savagery, mourn the loss of innocent life and share the pain and anger of the wounded and the bereaved families. But we are by no means intimidated. We will bring the perpetrators to justice as we have always done after every terrorist attack.

Our faith remains firm that the fight against terror can be won. The world can be made immensely safer. But the global coalition to defeat terrorism must be inclusive. It must be multilateral and democratic. It must empower the moderates of the world. And it must address the root causes of terrorism: the grievances and the poignant sense of injustice that drive human beings to such depths of despair that they would carry out the most heinous acts of mass murder and destruction. It must address grievances due to a poverty that is the offshoot of social and economic inequity, the affronts of tyranny and corruption, and the failure of States to deliver a standard of living that befits human dignity. Included are grievances due to political oppression, such as the aggression and brutalities that the Palestinian people continue to suffer in the hands of the occupying Power.

For the coalition that would fight terrorism and poverty to be truly multilateral and democratic, it must include the regional organizations, which are envisioned in the United Nations Charter as the pillars of global multilateralism.

The United Nations itself, in extending assistance and services to countries all over the world, needs support at the regional level. This is why we in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are striving to develop a robust partnership with the world Organization. We are confident that this partnership will prosper, as ASEAN evolves into a true community by the year 2020. As a security community, we will assume full responsibility for our security and political stability. As an economic and sociocultural community, we will be a stronger force for development and social integration in the Asia-Pacific region.

Together with our counterparts in two continents, we are building a bridge of cooperation across the Indian Ocean to form a partnership for development. A summit of Asian and African nations will formally establish this strategic partnership in April 2005 in Jakarta.

At the same time, the summit will pay tribute to a watershed event in the cause of equitable international relations. Thus, we will observe the Golden Jubilee of the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung in 1955. Moreover, ASEAN is networking in all directions, with its counterparts in the rest of the Asia-Pacific region, in Latin America and in Europe. We expect this network of regional organizations, in partnership with the United Nations, to be the ultimate form of multilateralism. This network can also help advance a global democratic agenda. To this end, Asia can make a significant contribution.

Today Asia is certainly in the midst of a democratic flowering. A series of successful democratic elections in various Asian countries in recent months has been hailed worldwide as a political miracle that may be of deeper significance than the short-lived Asian economic miracle a decade ago.

But democracy is never a miracle — never a gift, nor something imposed. It is always hard-earned and often the fruit of many sacrifices. And its ultimate worth depends entirely upon us, the people — on whether we have the political maturity, the wisdom and the courage to make it work and make it endure. We in Indonesia are devoutly committed to that end.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alberto Romulo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

Mr. Romulo (Philippines): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, as you ably and wisely guide our deliberations at the fifty-ninth session. Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia for his successful stewardship of the work of the fifty-eighth session.

The world has changed a great deal since our hopes and aspirations were enshrined in the Charter almost 60 years ago. What has not changed, but remains unaltered, is our collective desire to build a safe, tolerant and secure world, anchored in justice and social progress.

What has not changed is the very spirit and driving force that brought us together — we, the peoples of the United Nations. Those opening words of the Charter remind us that the United Nations is a creation of the peoples of the world. Those words compel us to recall that our Organization has been entrusted by our peoples with the sacred task of translating their aspirations into reality. They are words that tell us that we are assembled today not only as delegates of our Governments, but also as representatives of our peoples. With those words, the Charter freed the world from the notion that only States matter. With those words, the people were placed at the heart of our United Nations.

Today, the technologies and discoveries that make the world smaller and should bring us together are being used to tear us apart. Today, new forms of political, economic and social division directly threaten our people and the values and dreams they hold dear. These threats have the potential to overwhelm the gains of our Organization and to divide our peoples.

All these factors have given rise to clamour for decisive reform in the United Nations. We should start with the basic reform of the structures and relationships that define powers and responsibilities. For our Organization, this means pursuing earnest reforms in the Security Council; the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies; and the Secretariat. But addressing the most basic elements is also the most difficult thing to do.

Any planned reform of the United Nations should be endorsed by consensus by all 191 Member States. Any reform of the Security Council should give due consideration to the views of the five permanent members, as they will have the final say in the matter.

Any reform should also recognize that a country like Japan deserves to be considered for a seat as a permanent member.

We must all put our creative energies to work, spare no effort and ignore no avenue or opportunity in bringing greater peace and progress to our peoples. Religion and religious leaders have a role to play in fostering tolerance and greater understanding among peoples. They bring unique perspectives to the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Inter-faith dialogue between the peoples of different civilizations should also be encouraged. Deep and historic divisions can be healed through a dialogue between peoples of different faiths and civilizations. The Philippines will work with like-minded delegations in support of efforts to broaden such a dialogue.

Our peoples' differences, whether of belief or of culture, should not be a basis for misunderstanding or conflict. But most of all, reform must begin by placing the welfare and interests of the peoples of the world at the forefront our deliberations.

In the 15 minutes that it will take me to deliver my remarks, 60 people will have died of tuberculosis. By the time the curtain falls on a Broadway show, 250 persons, mostly women and children, will have been trafficked into forced servitude or prostitution. By the time we wake up tomorrow morning, 3,000 children will have died of malaria and a further 6,000 children will have perished for lack of clean water.

Instead of having school books in their hands, over 300,000 children in conflict areas have their fingers on the triggers of automatic rifles.

HIV/AIDS kills 3 million people a year; millions of refugees crowd camps. One fifth of the world's population still live in abject poverty, barely subsisting on less than the price of the newspaper sold around the corner from our hotels.

Terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the massive proliferation of small arms directly threaten the people and their livelihood and represent an assault on their dignity.

Critical flashpoints, most of which are in my part of the world, have the potential for armed conflict that would certainly place people and their futures at grave risk.

As a founding Member of the United Nations and as a current member of the Security Council, the Philippines places its faith in the Organization for the maintenance of international peace and security, the promotion of social progress and better standards of life and the protection of the fundamental rights of individuals.

People antedate the evolution of statehood. As we place people at the centre of the United Nations, I would like to highlight the need to protect their lives and the importance of ensuring their livelihood and promoting their dignity.

We must allow our peoples to live free from fear, to live in a safe and secure world. Terrorism poses a serious threat not only to the lives of our people, but also to the values and ideals that define our societies. Terrorism reduces people to mere pawns in a ruthless game of competing beliefs and ideologies.

The rubble in Jakarta has been cleared. Flowers cover the little graves in Beslan. But the enemies of all peoples are still lurking in the shadows, conspiring and plotting, with evil in their hearts and the blood of innocents on their hands.

The Philippines condemns all forms of terrorism. No cause or dogma can ever justify its use. Long before 11 September 2001, the Philippines and its people suffered from the scourge of terrorism. We have seen the face of terror and felt its deadly touch. We were among the first in our region to join the international war against terror. The Philippines believes that conflicts should be addressed before terrorism can begin to define or exploit them. This can be done by working together with other nations.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo believes that a new kind of peace has to be developed for a new kind of war, waged by terrorists. She proposes a new global alliance to alleviate poverty and remove it as a breeding ground for resentment and conflict.

With the help of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, violent secessionism has given way to peaceful autonomy in southern Philippines. The potential for terrorism to breed has been drastically reduced. In partnership with Malaysia, we are closer to a negotiated peace with the remaining secessionists, who themselves have renounced terror. With Norway as a facilitator, prospects remain for peace talks with one of the world's few remaining communist rebel groups.

Another important dimension of human security is economic. At the national level, economic security means primarily providing livelihood for the people. In the Philippines, President Arroyo has enshrined that goal in her 10-point programme of action for 2004 to 2010. The programme calls for the creation of 6 million jobs in six years by giving more opportunities to entrepreneurs, tripling the amount of loans to small and medium-size enterprises and developing 1 million to 2 million hectares of land for agribusiness.

If we are to maintain economic security, the international community should also make job creation a priority goal in international economic cooperation. The General Assembly should look more closely at innovative tools that will help spur economic growth, particularly in developing countries. Greater attention should be focused on how micro-credit or microfinance — an area where the Philippines has made significant strides — could serve as an instrument to alleviate the conditions of the poorest of the poor.

Creative ways to solve the lingering debt issue and the spiralling cost of energy should also be considered. We need to ease the burden of debt servicing and to channel those meagre resources to where they are needed most. Each day, developing countries pay the rich nations $717 million in debt service. Every baby born in the developing world already owes $482 at birth. Every year, sub-Saharan Africa pays $10 billion in debt service — four times as much money as the countries in the region spend on health care and education. The wise mobilization of domestic resources, such as remittances for development, should also be carefully studied. Remittances by migrants — much greater than the total amount of overseas development assistance — alleviate the poverty of the family members remaining in their country of origin.

Economic security prospers when the playing field is level for both developed and developing countries. Levelling the economic playing field ensures that the fruits of globalization will benefit the people in terms of better opportunities, more jobs and improved livelihood. International trade, investment and development are crucial tools in raising the people's standard of living. But the people of poor countries continue to face persistent barriers to their products from the developing world. Those barriers exist despite the strictures of the international trading system, emphasizing the need for an open, rule-based multilateral trading system.

Economic crises in developing countries result in immediate threats to human security. When people do not know where their next meal will come from or when their crops will fail, human security is compromised. In an interlinked global economy, crises spread rapidly. The prevention and mitigation of such crises in developing countries also enhances human security in developed countries. A World Bank study shows, for instance, that the total elimination of agricultural subsidies in rich countries would increase rural income in low- and medium-income countries by about $60 billion a year.

Needless to say, international trade policy needs to be fair, not only to farmers of the developed world, but also to their counterparts in the developing countries. As a start, a substantial reduction in agricultural subsidies for farmers in rich countries would go a long way towards helping their fellow agricultural workers beyond their borders. There is also a need for developed countries to implement their commitments to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance. Again, official development assistance is an instrument to help people help themselves — a social responsibility that is more pronounced now, in an era of increasing globalization. The inexorable pace of globalization fuels new phenomena and creates new challenges to human security. The fluidity of capital, technology, culture and even people should be acknowledged as inherent to globalization and should be harnessed for the good of the people.

Democracy and freedom — central elements to ensuring the rights and dignity of the people — should be encouraged and promoted, particularly in countries that are in transition or recovering from conflict. It is in that spirit that the Philippines supports the call for the establishment of a democracy fund. The Philippines is prepared to provide technical support and training in the areas of governance, the administration of justice, electoral processes and similar subjects, with third-party support. We will share our knowledge — a result of our own experience as Asia's first democracy — since we have had to struggle to regain and preserve that very same democracy.

The world should continue to support the people of Iraq in their valiant effort to create a democratic, free, pluralistic and secure nation. The Philippines stands ready to assist in implementing Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) on Iraq, which was unanimously adopted during our presidency of the Council last June. The United Nations has a significant role to play in Iraq in the political process leading to the elections scheduled for January next year, and it deserves the full support of the international community in its efforts to build a stable and peaceful Iraq.

Conflict has devastating effects on the safety and security of people. The deliberate targeting of innocent civilians as victims is increasingly being used as a weapon of war and as a tool of terrorists. The movement of people across borders reinforces the interdependence of countries, facilitates the transfer of skills and knowledge and stimulates economic growth and development. In order to protect the security of migrants, we must give them the legal status that will enable them to gain access to basic services and will ensure the protection of fundamental rights. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families entered into force on 1 July 2003. We take this opportunity to call on all our friends to make every effort to accede to the Convention.

The interdependence and interlinkages among the peoples of the world require that human security should top the agendas of local, national, regional and global governance. Human security addresses the challenges of the twenty-first century, responds to our peoples' aspirations as enshrined in our Charter and reinvigorates the United Nations in the process.

Finally, in a world where people are sometimes reduced to images on a screen and their suffering distilled into pixels and fonts, perhaps we should again be reminded that, when we gave life to the United Nations almost 60 years ago, we ushered in a new era in the human saga, embarking on our historic journey with the words: "We the peoples of the United Nations ...".

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nizar Obaid Madani, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Madani (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to express to you, Sir, and to your friendly country, Gabon, our sincere congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. We are confident that you will lead the work of this session in a highly capable and efficient manner. I should also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia, who, as President of the last session of the Assembly, managed its affairs with wisdom and skill.

On this occasion, I should like to convey the deep appreciation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan for his sustained, diligent and commendable efforts to maintain international peace and security and to revitalize the role of the United Nations and enhance its functions, capacities, credibility and effectiveness. In that regard, the speech given by the Secretary-General last week is notable and praiseworthy, as it provided a blueprint and guidelines for enhancing the resiliency of the international order. It is crucial when tackling global issues to bridge the gaps in the international order so that measures are not applied selectively or arbitrarily.

The accelerating global changes and the grave challenges facing the international community today necessitate more than ever a scrutiny of the working methods of the United Nations, as well as the structures and functions of its organs, in order to enhance its ability to prevent and resolve conflicts and to maintain international peace and security.

In that respect, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports the call for reform of the Security Council, in particular, an increase in its membership in order to improve geographical representation, a greater transparency in its work, a halt to the application of double standards and the adoption of measures that will enhance the credibility of the Council's work and guarantee respect for, and compliance with, its resolutions.

Among the important reforms needed in our Organization is restriction of the veto power. Permanent members of the Security Council should not be allowed to invoke their right of veto in cases where proposed resolutions and procedures are adopted to implement previously agreed resolutions.

It is also imperative to establish an optimal balance between the General Assembly and the Security Council, to enhance the role of the Economic and Social Council and to establish closer coordination among the various United Nations funds, programmes and activities.

We reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations and the multilateral international order. Today, more than ever, the international community is in dire need of a unified and mutually supportive stance in order to achieve just solutions to the current problems we all face. It is through respect for the shared values, traditions and principles that are deeply rooted in the conscience of all mankind that we can promote constructive cooperation and the achievement of security, peace, stability and prosperity for all nations.

Humanity has been afflicted by the growing danger of terrorism. It is a phenomenon that does not differentiate between societies. Increasingly, terrorist groups have been crossing borders and expanding their networks into different regions, nations and continents. Today, it is therefore critical that we exert every effort possible to increase international cooperation to combat terrorism and confront those who instigate and finance it.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and is cooperating with the international community to eliminate that global evil. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has affirmed its full support for the Security Council resolutions relating to terrorism. In that regard, Saudi Arabia has taken the necessary steps to close any loopholes in its domestic regulations on charitable fund-raising activities that might allow such funds to be used for illicit purposes. We have established a public commission tasked with supervising and organizing the activities of all charitable and relief organizations with a view to streamlining their operations and preventing those with bad intentions and evil objectives from using their humanitarian funds for illegal purposes.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was among the first signatories of the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism and other similar agreements emanating from the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council. In addition, it has acceded to nine other international anti-terrorism conventions and agreements. In that regard, the Government of Saudi Arabia has recently taken a series of measures that are indicative of its seriousness and determination to fight terrorism. Its strategy of preventive action to forestall criminal acts has already been successful in the fight against this deadly scourge and has earned the praise and admiration of the international community and international organizations.

It is important to remember that crimes committed by a handful of criminals and misguided felons cannot justify incriminating a whole society or an entire culture. Terrorism can strike any city and target any interests, regardless of the nationality, religion or ethnic origin of the victims. Terrorism is a global phenomenon that calls for joint action and cooperation by all countries and requires the close collaboration of concerned international organizations to effectively find the means to confront it and eliminate it.

It is on the basis of the foregoing that I am pleased to announce before this gathering that the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has decided to host an international conference to combat terrorism, to be held in Riyadh from 5 to 8 February 2005. Its purpose is to exchange information and experience in the field of combating terrorism and to see how we can cooperate with other countries in the fight against that universal threat. We also intend to use this excellent opportunity to learn about scientific and practical techniques relevant not only to combating terrorism, but also to the prevention of money-laundering, drug trafficking and arms smuggling. The conference will also provide a good forum in which to study the culture and psychology of terrorists and the structure of terrorist organizations.

Official invitations to the anti-terrorism conference have already been extended to concerned international organizations as well as to countries that have suffered or are suffering from terrorism. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomes the participation of all those invited and hopes that the outcome and final recommendations of the conference will constitute an important addition and a great support to international efforts to eradicate terrorism and address the root causes of that dangerous phenomenon.

The setback in the peace process and the mounting wave of violence and extremism in our region are largely attributable to the Israeli Government's pursuit of policies that are totally incompatible with the fundamental principles of the peace process, notably the principle of land for peace. Israel's actions are in contravention of Security Council resolutions — in particular, resolutions 242 (1967) and

338 (1973) — and the road map. They are incompatible with the United States Administration's vision of two States — an Israeli State and an independent Palestinian State — living side by side.

The Arab peace initiative continues to stand as a credible basis for the security and stability of all the peoples of the region because it ensures a lasting, just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is therefore incumbent upon all of us to exert our utmost efforts to put the peace process back on track. It is particularly important to push the peace process forward after it has stalled and after the humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people — which should be a goad to the conscience of the international community — has been met with indifference.

Furthermore, peace cannot be achieved by unilateral Israeli measures that create new realities on the ground and that are designed to prejudice the final outcome of any political negotiations on the delicate issue of a final settlement. The Palestinian question cannot be solved, nor can the Arab-Israeli conflict be ended, through the use of excessive force — aerial bombardment, guided missiles, assassination of Palestinian activists, destruction of infrastructure, usurpation of property, violation of rights and the imposition of collective punishment. Peace will be achieved and security will prevail only when United Nations resolutions are implemented, the provisions of international law are respected and applied and the principles of justice and equality are observed.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia condemns the continuous escalation against the Palestinian people and the Israeli Government's insistence on establishing and expanding its settlements. We also condemn the continued construction of the separation wall that has annexed extensive Palestinian lands in unprecedented defiance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which acknowledged the illegality of the wall and ordered Israel to dismantle it, as well as the General Assembly resolution that followed that opinion, effectively demonstrating the consensus of the international community on the issue.

However, if Israel is serious about withdrawing from Gaza and about dismantling its settlements there, we stress that such an action should proceed in coordination with the Palestinian Authority, in conformity with the requirements of the road map and under the supervision of the Quartet. The proposed withdrawal should come about as a first step towards a complete and full withdrawal from all the Palestinian lands, including Al-Quds.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is closely monitoring efforts to eliminate all forms of weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East and to keep it free from all such lethal weapons. In that respect, we call upon the international community to adopt an even-handed approach, refrain from applying double standards, assume its legal and moral responsibilities and urge the Israeli Government to refrain from the development of its nuclear programmes, as well as subject its nuclear installations to the inspection and safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We are profoundly distressed and gravely concerned at the deteriorating security situation in some parts of Iraq, where tragic incidents, heinous acts of violence, and the horrific kidnapping of innocent people seem to be daily occurrences. Faced with this appalling reality, we can only urge the Iraqi people and all Iraqi factions to mend fences and work hand in hand to support the efforts of their transitional Government to establish the security, safety and well-being of their country; preserve its national unity and independence and ensure the restoration of Iraq's effective and positive role in the international arena. We also call upon the United Nations to play a greater role in assisting the Iraqi Government to meet the requirements of the ongoing political process, including by conducting general elections, which we hope will lead to a permanent legitimate Government, and proceeding with reconstruction efforts.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has presented some ideas regarding the deployment of Islamic troops in Iraq. With the consent of the Iraqi Government and under United Nations supervision, we would like such troops not to supplement, but to replace, the multilateral forces. Those ideas, however, have not materialized, although their basic premise deserves consideration and follow-up.

With respect to developments in the brotherly country of the Sudan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is profoundly moved by the humanitarian tragedy in Darfur and supports the efforts of the Government of the Sudan to restore stability in that region. We support the Sudan's cooperation with relief and humanitarian organizations and others in addressing the humanitarian situation resulting from the crisis. We hope that the efforts of the Government of the Sudan and those of the African Union will be given sufficient time to restore security to the region and to ensure the well-being of its people.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has initiated an ongoing airlift operation, using Saudi cargo planes, to provide direct humanitarian assistance to the Darfur region. This assistance includes medical and food supplies, tents and power generators. Moreover, there are Saudi relief teams in the region who have established clinics and hospitals inside camps and equipped them with doctors, medicine, medical supplies and tests. In addition, wells have been dug to provide the camps with drinking water, and electricity is being supplied.

Human development and economic prosperity are major keys to achieving a better future for developing countries. To reach that objective, developed and developing nations can work together to achieve great success. My country has contributed to this process by adopting and implementing numerous development projects and by extending generous assistance to developing and least developed countries through national, regional and international agencies, in order to help them in overcoming the problems of poverty and underdevelopment.

We appreciate the concern expressed by the Group of Eight at their summit in Sea Island, Georgia, in the United States, regarding the future of the Middle East and their desire to help the countries of the region develop and make progress. However, we believe that political and economic reforms should not be imposed or dictated from outside; rather, international assistance in this area should serve as a catalyst to help these nations initiate their own reforms. Outside interference on the question of reform can only result in disrupting and stalling processes that are already under way.

For reforms to be effective and lasting, they should reflect the actual needs of the societies concerned and should conform with a given State's stage of development. Of course, there is much that the advanced countries can do to help in this process, especially in the areas of investment, trade liberalization, international economic cooperation and the opening of their markets. We believe that removing protective measures, such as trade barriers and tariffs, and eliminating preferential treatment that hinders the ability of developing countries to enter the markets of developed countries can go far in achieving desired development goals. There is, moreover, a need to make the necessary effort to help those countries to overcome their problems and their chronic political conflicts.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, based on its position of responsibility and its effective role in the international oil market, has consistently sought to meet its obligations to maintain stable oil markets and ensure continuing world economic growth. To that end, it has increased its production capacity to ensure sufficient supply and to control unnatural oil price surges.

In this regard, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia took the initiative of establishing the International Energy Forum and hosting its general secretariat in Riyadh. The Forum has become a platform for discussing ways and means of cooperation and dialogue between consumer and producer countries, whether within or outside the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Those countries should seek to intensify their cooperation in order to ensure stable markets for the strategic commodity of petroleum, and to guarantee the continued growth of the global economy.

In view of the tragic security events on the international scene, the world needs, more than ever, concerted international efforts to increase dialogue and raise the level of understanding, mutual contact and familiarity among nations and cultures. The world needs to embark on a serious effort to propagate a culture of peace, in order to achieve for our fellow human beings the dignity and prosperity they deserve. We need to do more to put an end to the wave of violence and work for the achievement of justice and the termination of racial discrimination.

God Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, And made you into Nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you."

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of this session. We assure you that we will sincerely cooperate with you in order to contribute to the success of this session and to the realization of the desirable objectives to which we all aspire. We all hope to serve humankind and the cause of international peace and security.

I also take this opportunity, Sir, to express my heartfelt thanks to his Excellency Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, your predecessor and President of the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, for all his efforts to ensure the success of that session and of the concurrent resumptions of the tenth emergency special session.

This session of the General Assembly has been convened under very complex and difficult circumstances. There has been a clear decline in the international community's ability to unite and to reach consensus on solutions to the diverse problems that have undermined international diplomacy. Those problems have deprived preventive diplomacy of its ability to create an environment of international understanding conducive to agreement on issues of common interest to all peoples.

We believe that there is an urgent need for the international community to review both regional and international policies and to put an end to the sense of uncertainty, pessimism and vagueness surrounding the work of the United Nations. States that can influence international policy have a moral and material responsibility to take the initiative to review those policies and create an environment of cooperation among international stakeholders.

The region of the Middle East is the focus of global attention, because of its potential impact on international stability. We share the interest shown by many countries in the situation in the Middle East, which is prompted by the need to find solutions to the political and social problems facing the region.

Here, it is worth noting that the Group of Eight, at its meeting on Sea Island in the state of Georgia in the United States on 9 June 2004, focused their interest on the Middle East. In principle, we welcome their position since we believe that closer cooperation is essential within the Group of Eight and the countries of the Middle East to consider how to prioritize the discussion of the political issues that remain the main obstacle to the march of the people of the Middle East towards progress and stability.

The problem of Palestine and Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories in Syria and Lebanon cannot be put on the back burner indefinitely. Therefore, we should seek fair and just solutions to those problems. The road map announced on 30 April 2003 was welcomed by the Arab countries but has yet to be implemented. We therefore call on the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations — the members of the Quartet that sponsored the road map — to fulfil their commitment to the Middle East.

The Security Council adopted resolution 1546 (2004), by which it transferred sovereignty in Iraq from the Coalition forces to an interim Iraqi Government. It was a milestone in the development of the situation in Iraq. However, the deteriorating security situation in Iraq remains a cause of deep concern. We believe that the interim Iraqi Government is making great efforts to restore normalcy and stability. We support the Government of Iraq in its endeavours to unify all Iraqis around a common agenda. We feel that certain successes have been achieved through the adoption of political dialogue, and that it is essential to Iraq to expand that dialogue.

In the Sudan, the Government has been making commendable efforts to achieve stability in Darfur. We look forward to ongoing cooperation between the African Union and the Sudanese Government. The Government's willingness to implement certain measures proposed by the United Nations and to cooperate with the Security Council to implement resolution 1564 (2004) deserves our support and commendation.

In our view, the United Nations should provide financial and technical support to the efforts of the African Union and the Sudanese Government to achieve peace in Darfur. Moreover, we believe that any action by the Security Council against the Sudan would be harmful and would undermine the United Nations ability to work effectively on the ground. It would, moreover, hamper the efforts of the Sudan and the African Union to achieve peace.

All human beings share this Earth and should work together to develop and preserve its resources. It is highly important that the international community take note of the environmental changes taking place everywhere, such as the destructive storms, floods and fires that have had tremendously harmful effects on all humanity. Those phenomena may be caused by human transgression and destruction of environmental diversity. That is why the international community is called upon to study the environment and do whatever it can to stem the phenomenon of desertification and drought in order to preserve great global sources of food.

Recent international policies have resulted in the emergence of serious types of terrorist acts. One of the most horrific of such acts was the hostage-taking in a school in Beslan in North Ossetia in the Russian Federation. We strongly condemn that terrorist act and express our solidarity with the Russian Government in fighting such attacks. We believe that the international community should show solidarity in the face of terrorism everywhere and engage in in-depth consideration of the phenomenon. The convening of an international conference to consider terrorism is a good idea, since the outcome of such a conference could be an important tool that would help defeat the phenomenon.

The Sultanate of Oman believes that States' accession and commitment to disarmament treaties and conventions would enhance and maintain international peace and security. In that context, we should seriously consider the possibility of establishing collective mechanisms for arms monitoring and control, based on unified standards acceptable to all, be it in the field of weapons of mass destruction or that of conventional weapons. Otherwise, the role of the world order will remain limited to theoretical studies or to drawing attention to the dangers of the arms race to development, the environment and international peace and security.

The world stockpile of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, could destroy human life on our planet many times over. That is why the Sultanate of Oman has signed most conventions on disarmament and arms control, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention.

The emergence of globalization and the World Trade Organization raised the hopes and aspirations of peoples for an era of international cooperation that would broaden sustainable development. However, the results of the new developments have been an amalgamation of democracy and dictatorship, of human rights and enslavement, of great prosperity and extreme poverty, of the provision of advanced health care side by side with fatal contagious diseases, of free trade and world trade monopoly, and of a rise in the price of industrial products and a decline in the prices of the raw materials required to maintain their production. The amalgam has led to economic imbalances. Is that what we sought to achieve?

The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change was established in the context of an initiative by the Secretary-General to seek ways of reforming the Organization, and in particular of expanding the permanent membership of the Security Council. We would welcome such an expansion in order to broaden the base of participation in the Council's decision-making process. However, the permanent members should work to create an international climate conducive to an expansion that reflects the international will. Conditions of membership should be reviewed to include aspects that conform to international changes so as to guarantee equitable representation and international consensus if possible.

We believe that it is high time for permanent members of the Security Council to review their own attitudes and policies in the Council in order to facilitate the required restructuring. We believe that the excessive adoption of Security Council resolutions on secondary international issues undermines the prestige of the Council and reduces the ability of the United Nations to deal with priority questions that are important to international peace and security. We believe that the Security Council must not interfere in the internal affairs of Member States, so as to preserve the international consensus in addressing issues related to international peace and security.

The Sultanate of Oman would like to express its support to the efforts made by the United Nations. We would particularly like to express our support to the Secretary-General and to the role he plays in conducting the affairs of this Organization. Our delegation will spare no effort to ensure the success of this session, in order to realize the objectives to which we all aspire.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sodiq Safoev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Safoev (Uzbekistan): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you, Sir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, on your election as the President of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in this important position. I would also like to extend our appreciation to Mr. Julian Hunte for the excellent organization of the previous session.

The serious challenges to global stability and sustainable development that the international community faces vindicate the urgent need to further develop the legal and institutional foundations of multilateral cooperation. There is no doubt that the central role in coordinating these efforts belongs to the United Nations. It is important, today as never before, to define the direction of the dynamic adaptation of the United Nations to current realities, based on the Organization's unique experience of over half a century, and to find adequate responses to the pressing issues of the contemporary world.

Developments in the Central Asian region provide a vivid demonstration of the intermingling of the contradictory processes that are unfolding around the globe. The aspirations of the peoples of Central Asia to fully integrate into the world community, to create conditions for sustainable stability and economic development are facing serious challenges. The region is faced with a combination of transnational threats, namely terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking. Similar patterns can be observed in other regions of the world as well.

Not a single day passes without terrorist acts taking place somewhere in the world. It is obvious and undeniable that international terrorism has challenged the civilized world. It makes no exceptions and does not distinguish between places, nationalities, religions or social systems. It sows death and devastation in both affluent and developing nations. We need to admit that international terrorism, which is capable of quickly transforming and adapting to the changing circumstances of the contemporary world, is trying to impose its terms and conditions and keep entire regions in fear.

From the outset, Uzbekistan has firmly and vigorously supported the efforts of the anti-terrorist coalition aimed at eradicating transnational threats. The political leadership of Uzbekistan is deeply committed to the fight against this plague of the twenty-first century and calls for a consolidation of the international community's efforts in this area.

However, effectively fighting international terrorism requires, above all, combating its ideological sources. It is vital to oppose the ideology of extremism and fanaticism and to outlaw militant radical religious groups that nurture international terrorism.

At the same time, Uzbekistan strongly opposes any kind of allegations or assertions linking international terrorism with the ever-growing religion of Islam, which has made an immense contribution to the history of humanity. Uzbekistan, home of the greatest thinkers and philosophers of the East, is adamantly pursuing an all-out support of traditional, enlightened Islam. Only by promoting and encouraging ideas of an enlightened and tolerant Islam can we effectively withstand militant, politicized extremist factions and avert further confrontations in the world.

Uzbekistan holds that, in reviewing the urgent issues of global security, the regional agenda should be given priority. Only by means of secure and stable regions can we gradually move towards global security. The establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Central Asia remains one of the priorities of our foreign policy. We again call upon the permanent members of the Security Council to develop — in cooperation with the States of the region — a consolidated position on the provisions of the treaty and its protocol. We trust that the establishment of this nuclear-weapons-free zone would become an important element of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Many issues of regional development are directly linked to the processes taking place in Afghanistan. We believe that Afghanistan is historically and geographically a part of Central Asia. Uzbekistan has been giving all possible assistance to the Afghan people for the social and economic reconstruction of the country and its harmonious integration into regional structures. The Government of Uzbekistan, in cooperation with United Nations agencies, has set up and is successfully implementing a delivery mechanism for international humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan via Uzbekistan. To date, over 2.5 million tons of such cargo has passed through our territory. In addition, we are doing all we can to reduce transit costs and improve the service infrastructure.

In light of the continuous threat of narcotics proliferation from Afghanistan, Central Asia, on the frontline of combating narco-aggression, is facing the problem of effectively countering this global menace. We look forward to the international community's firm and continuous support of Uzbekistan's initiative to establish a Central Asian regional information and coordination centre to combat transborder crime related to illegal drug trafficking.

The United Nations has been present in Uzbekistan for over a decade. During this period, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has carried out numerous important projects aimed at strengthening the country's potential in implementing reforms, protecting the environment and creating sustainable sources of income. We truly appreciate this.

In this regard, we look forward to assistance from UNDP and other United Nations agencies in implementing Uzbekistan's initiative to establish a Central Asian common market. This would contribute not only to creating a large and robust regional market and attracting more foreign investment and modern technologies, but also to properly addressing the social and environmental problems of Central Asia, including its sustainable development and economic prosperity.

Overcoming the transportation and communication isolation of the region is another top priority. In that context, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the multilateral initiative to establish a trans-Afghan transport corridor, which would link Central Asia with the Persian Gulf. The implementation of that project would significantly expand trade and economic relations and fundamentally improve the region's economic prospects.

We agree with the view of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, that the present juncture is of crucial importance for the United Nations. There is no other multilateral forum similar to the United Nations, in which countries that differ from one another in terms of cultural and historical heritage, economic potential and geographic location can work together as equal partners.

In the context of the current, increasingly complex globalization processes, the strengthening of the Security Council is of paramount significance. Uzbekistan supports the enlargement of the Security Council in both categories of membership, taking into account the political and economic capabilities of countries, geographical representation and other criteria. We reiterate our support for the inclusion of Germany and Japan in the Security Council as permanent members.

In conclusion, I should like once again to underscore the fact that Uzbekistan is confident that the United Nations will retain its role as the main pillar of the international security and cooperation architecture. We believe that the invaluable potential of the United Nations, which withstood all the upheavals of the previous century, will long serve the cause of consolidating our efforts in the face of global challenges.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on The Honourable Keith Desmond Knight, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica.

Mr. Knight (Jamaica): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. You can be assured of Jamaica's fullest support and cooperation during your tenure.

The outgoing President, Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia, deserves commendation for his energy and outstanding leadership during the fifty-eighth session, during which he achieved significant accomplishments, particularly in the area of the revitalization of the General Assembly. He leaves a legacy of a strengthened presidency and a good foundation for further operational improvements in the work of the Assembly and in its relations with other organs.

In reviewing the developments of the past year, we note that the anticipated growth in the global economy has been dampened by uncertainties arising from macro-economic imbalances in larger economies and the impact of increased oil prices. Political instability in many regions of the world has not abated and, in some cases, has increased to critical levels. Many developing countries continue to struggle for survival in the globalized economy, especially in the face of changing commodity regimes, the erosion of preferences and unfavourable market conditions. The gap between rich and poor continues to widen. There may be some glimmers of hope, but more needs to be done to correct existing imbalances and to broaden opportunities for all to share in global prosperity. Formidable challenges remain for developing countries.

In our part of the world, those challenges have taken on grave new proportions in the wake of the recent spate of hurricanes which have devastated the Caribbean and affected several States of the United States of America. In the Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, the Cayman Islands, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti and my own country, Jamaica, the loss of life and the scale of destruction and damage to infrastructure, property and means of livelihood have been catastrophic. What had taken several generations to build has suddenly vanished and will take years to recover. The case of Grenada, which was virtually obliterated, is particularly striking. For those who have had doubts about the reality of the vulnerability of small island States, these recent events should be convincing evidence.

In Jamaica, we are completing our estimates of the damage from Hurricane Ivan, which struck on 10 September, virtually on the anniversary date of Hurricane Gilbert, still painfully fresh in our memory. On behalf of the Government and the people of Jamaica, I extend deep appreciation to the Member States, the agencies of the United Nations, and other international and non-governmental organizations which have given assistance. We have launched an international appeal to support our national efforts for immediate and long-term recovery. Apart from the provision of emergency relief supplies, there is a need for concessionary financing to the affected countries, so as to facilitate medium- to long-term reconstruction. One means of doing this would be through the establishment of a special fund.

In the context of these recent developments, the 10-year review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States, to be held in Mauritius in January 2005, is a timely opportunity for the international community to undertake special consideration of the vulnerability of small island States. We expect the Mauritius review to adopt concrete measures and call for serious consideration to be given to mechanisms to support the recovery and reconstruction efforts of small island developing States in the aftermath of natural disasters.

What should also command attention are the dangers posed by climate change and global warming and the urgent need for global action within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol. It is imperative that all States accede to the Protocol.

It is accepted that the benefits of globalization are not being fully realized, especially in the area of international trade. We should seek to harness its potential to the benefit of developed and developing countries alike. Interdependence makes this an imperative. Global economic health requires better management of economic arrangements at all levels, to ensure a more equitable distribution of global prosperity.

The situation of small developing economies makes a compelling case. From any objective standpoint, there is a need for special and differential treatment in relation to trade, the flow of financial resources, the transfer of technology and the promotion of industrial development. The gap between rich and poor must be narrowed. Otherwise, many developing countries will continue in a downward spiral of declining income and increased poverty, with painful consequences such as political and social instability and recurring humanitarian crises. While there is no substitute for self-reliance, on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility, there is a role for all participants within the global economic system.

That is why international cooperation for development should be given a central place in our deliberations. There is a need to create institutional capacity in the United Nations for the direction and coordination of policies affecting finance, trade and technology and for formulating the overall policies guiding international economic cooperation. Such a mechanism could forge effective linkages with the Bretton Woods institutions in order to manage and promote coherence in international economic programmes and policies. It should effectively respond to economic crises as they arise and apply remedies for imbalances and disequilibrium in the global economy.

Some tentative steps have been taken in that direction in the wake of the Monterrey Conference, but much more is required to reform governance in the international economic system to make it more democratic, transparent and responsive to the real needs and priorities of developing countries.

The cycle of violence resulting from war and terrorism is a troubling phenomenon of our time. International security is dangerously at risk. What is clear to us is that violence and the use of force cannot be the answer. We must embrace multilateralism and insist that international relations be guided by the rule of law as the basis for our collective security.

Against that background, the necessary steps must be taken to strengthen multilateralism. The United Nations must be our instrument of choice. There is no viable alternative to the Organization, and it can be made as effective as it needs to be only if it is given the powers and resources that are required. We must continue to nourish and strengthen it and make adaptations in the face of changing realities to improve its effectiveness and enhance its credibility. Reform could begin with the Security Council, to make it more representative in membership, more democratic in its decision-making and more accountable and transparent in its operations. These are necessary for its effectiveness and legitimacy. We look forward to receiving the recommendations of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

The improvement of international security depends on our finding durable solutions to regional conflicts and disputes. In Africa, there is a need to expedite relief for humanitarian emergencies, to promote initiatives aimed at resolving internecine conflicts and to advance the struggle for economic and social progress. We are distressed by the deterioration in the political and humanitarian situation in the Darfur region of the Sudan, and we support constructive efforts to bring an end to the disruption and the bloodshed. We commend the role of the African Union aimed at resolving the crisis.

We continue to call for good sense and wisdom to defuse the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Jamaica believes that only through a process of political accommodation and the settlement of legitimate claims and grievances, on the basis of justice and legality, can there be any hope for a durable peace.

The war in Iraq has opened up further complexities and further divisions and is becoming a dangerous source of continuing conflict. A political solution is needed to bring about national reconciliation and peace.

Small countries face particular dangers in maintaining stability and security. I am referring to the increasing production, distribution and proliferation of small arms and light weapons and of sophisticated ammunition. These represent our greatest security threat. Small States do not produce these weapons, but they have become the principal victims of them. The influx of these weapons through various illicit channels is fuelling civil conflict and criminal violence whose extent and intensity beleaguer and often overwhelm national security forces. It is estimated in the 2004 Small Arms Survey that the proliferation and misuse of small arms contributes annually to approximately 200,000 to 270,000 civilian deaths, 40 per cent of which are concentrated in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Equally disturbing to us is the insufficient appreciation of these dangers by those countries that are the producers and source of the weapons. We maintain that such States have a duty to prevent illicit transfers beyond their borders. Additionally, we need more effective cooperation to regulate and restrict the movement of these weapons and to have effective registration and monitoring of transfers, operating within a framework of legally binding obligations.

For that reason, it is urgent that we move to conclude the negotiations for an international convention to achieve those objectives. We make this demand for action on the basis of the principle of the equal right to security for all States. The threats and dangers we face are as valid as those arising from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These also demand collective action; and, in this, Jamaica has been unrelenting in its support of effective measures aimed at curtailing the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

The year 2004 was declared the International Year for the Commemoration of the Struggle Against Slavery and its Abolition. Our history makes this a special commemoration. We also celebrate the 200th anniversary of the independence of Haiti. The Haitian revolution was an achievement of immense historical importance that significantly influenced the shaping of the modern world. It established the first free nation in the Western Hemisphere, and it struck the first decisive blow that eventually brought about the overthrow of the system of slavery in the Americas. The revolution was a story of heroism and triumph, creating a legacy that has sustained the Haitian people during a long and often lonely struggle for survival over the years, in the harsh realties of a hostile world of racism and discrimination.

Sadly, the bicentennial celebration has been overshadowed by circumstances of instability and political crisis that continue even now. The events of February still cast a shadow and leave lingering concerns about how the democratically elected President demitted office. The sequence of events and the timing of the Security Council in reacting to the crisis were unfortunate. At the same time, Jamaica recognizes that Haiti requires the support and assistance of the international community, which must be sustained over the long term to ensure its effectiveness. The rebuilding of democracy and the creation of a stable social, economic and political order cannot be accomplished overnight, and therefore it should be pursued with perseverance and the commitment of the necessary resources.

We share the anguish and grief of the people of Haiti at the tragic loss of life and devastation caused by the recent hurricane. The Caribbean Community will continue to do its part in providing emergency assistance.

This year, we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the International Seabed Authority. For all of us, and for Jamaica, that is a significant milestone in the quiet evolution and promotion of a legal regime for the seabed, which embodies the principle of the common heritage of mankind. What we, as a community, can take from this to other spheres of international relations is the importance of upholding the rule of law and the pre-eminence of the principles of justice and equity. The Secretary-General rightly emphasized the importance of those norms last Tuesday when introducing his report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1).

The international community should not stand idly by in the presence of violations of international law and the promotion of doctrines that run counter to the principles of multilateralism. That is why Jamaica asks of this fifty-ninth session that all States recommit themselves to the principles on which the Organization was founded to promote peace, equality and justice for all its Members. Let us take the necessary steps to put those principles into practice and to make them the foundation of our policies and programmes. Our universal objective must be to implement the noble ideals to which we subscribe, not just to articulate them.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Choe Su Hon, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Choe Su Hon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Ping, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I believe that your skilful leadership of this session will yield fruitful results. I also appreciate the active efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to ensure the central role of the United Nations in addressing major international issues.

Four years have passed since we marked the beginning of the new century. However, humankind is still confronted with grave challenges in its efforts to realize the aspirations of peoples to build a peaceful and prosperous world.

Unilateralism and high-handedness are becoming increasingly evident, giving rise to aggression, arbitrariness and instability in many parts of the world. Consequently, the vicious circle in which the sovereignty and interests of weak and small countries are trampled for the sake of the exclusive interests of certain other countries continues unabated.

Today, the main factors undermining international peace and stability are unilateralism and high-handed acts based on the logic of power. The challenges facing humankind today require, more urgently than ever, United Nations Member States to strengthen their joint efforts to seek to ensure equitable international relations based on multilateralism that fully observe the universal principles of respect for sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and mutual benefit.

One of the regions where unilateralism and high-handedness are most rampant is North-East Asia — to be more specific, the Korean peninsula. On the Korean peninsula, the national division forcibly brought about by outside forces has continued for more than half a century, and the danger of war is snowballing, owing to extreme attempts by the United States to isolate and stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to threats of pre-emptive strikes against it.

At this very moment, all kinds of sophisticated war equipment are being deployed in and around the

Korean peninsula, targeting the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The acute political and military situation prevailing in and around the Korean peninsula proves clearly once again how right it was of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to have built up its strong self-defensive military power to prevent war and ensure peace, upholding the Songun policy of the respected General Kim Jong Il.

The more vicious the attempts of outside forces to isolate and stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the higher our army and people, firmly united around their leader, hold up the banner of Songun and push ahead with their struggle to build a prosperous and powerful State, with hope for the future and devotion to the socialist cause.

The Songun policy — the independent policy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea — serves as a reliable deterrent to ensure peace and security, not only on the Korean peninsula, but also in North-East Asia and the rest of the world. We feel great pride and self-confidence in that respect.

The reunification of the country is a prerequisite for achieving a durable peace on the Korean peninsula, and we are steadfast in our determination to achieve national reunification, independently, on the basis of the North-South Joint Declaration of 15 June.

That Joint Declaration is one of national independence, as well as a milestone of reunification indicating the path towards national reconciliation, collaboration and reunification.

Various actions aimed at national co-prosperity were begun in accordance with the lofty spirit of the Joint Declaration. The connecting of railways and roads has proceeded, linking up the once-severed main artery of the country; contacts and mutual travel at all levels increased; and inter-Korean economic cooperation has been guaranteed at the institutional level.

It is regrettable, however, that that tortuous process of reconciliation and cooperation between the north and the south of Korea was not sustained until durable peace and reunification could be achieved. That is because the process is unwelcome to the United States, which is therefore dead-set against improved relations and the ongoing cooperative activities, which are taking place at all levels between the north and the south of Korea.

The United States should no longer hamper the efforts of the north and the south of Korea to achieve national reconciliation, collaboration and reunification.

No matter how the situation may change in the future, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue to strive to overcome all the challenges of the anti-reunification forces within and without, and to open up a broad path leading to the independent reunification of the country through national cooperation, based on the great proposition, "By our nation itself".

I would like to take this opportunity to clarify once again the principled stand of our Government regarding the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

As I have made clear time and again from this rostrum, the nuclear issue is the product of the deep-rooted hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea pursued by the United States for more than half a century. In other words, given the fact that the current United States Administration, which is accustomed to rejecting our system, has been attempting to eliminate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by force, while designating it part of an "axis of evil" and a target for pre-emptive nuclear strikes, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been left with no other option than to possess a nuclear deterrent.

Peace is very precious to our people, who have been living for more than half a century with the heartbreaking pain of national division, forcibly brought about by outside forces, and under constant threat from the world's only super-Power.

Our people aspire to peace more than others, but they never beg for peace. The peace that they want to achieve is the peace of an independent life, not the peace of slaves, deprived of freedom.

The confrontation on the Korean peninsula today is, in essence, a confrontation between foreign forces intruding into someone's home and the owners of that home struggling to defend it.

The nuclear deterrent capability of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea constitutes a legitimate means of self-defence to counter the ever-growing nuclear threat of the United States and its aggression against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as a reliable means to defend the sovereignty, peace and security of the country.

The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is our goal, and it is the consistent position of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to address peacefully the nuclear issue between our country and the United States through dialogue and negotiation.

If the United States were to renounce practically its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including the cessation of its nuclear threats, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would, accordingly, be willing to scrap its nuclear deterrent.

On the basis of that position, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea proposed a package solution underpinned by the word-for-word and action-for-action principle aimed at achieving a peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue. As the first step towards that end, we offered the flexible "reward for freeze" proposal.

In this regard, at the third round of the six-party talks last June, the countries concerned shared the view that it was important that both sides adhere to the word-for-word and action-for-action principle and the "corresponding measures for freeze" approach, and reached an agreement.

The "reward for freeze" proposal provides for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to freeze all nuclear-weapon-related facilities and the output from their operations, on the condition that the United States abandon its hostile policy, in particular its demands relating to the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of our nuclear programme and, at the same time, that it lift its economic sanctions and blockade against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, remove the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from its list of the sponsors of terrorism and participate in an energy compensation scheme involving two million kilowatts of capacity.

By offering this proposal, it is our intention, first, to build mutual confidence, and, eventually, to resolve the nuclear issue fundamentally by addressing each other's concerns and meeting respective demands step by step, on the basis of simultaneous actions, given that the current situation is characterized by hostile relations between the two countries and extreme distrust.

The proposed "reward for freeze" process would be a confidence-building measure between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. Such confidence will be possible only when the United States rewards us for imposing a freeze.

It is only natural that everything should have a beginning and an order. From that point of view, our freeze will be the first step towards the eventual dismantling of our nuclear programme. Of course, the freeze will be followed by objective verification.

In order to further clarify our will to dismantle the nuclear deterrent, we had intended to include in our freeze a halt to the manufacture, testing and transfer of nuclear weapons. The United States, however, disregarding the common understanding and agreement reached at the third round of six-party talks, has further intensified its hostile and increasingly overt acts against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, even openly announcing that there would be no reward for the freezing and dismantling of our nuclear facilities. Most recently, the United States adopted a bill on human rights in North Korea and thus made it legal to provide financial and material support for overthrowing our system and to force third countries to do so.

The United States has gone so far as to slander and debase the supreme leadership of its dialogue partner. It also forces us to disarm ourselves like a defeated nation, thus attempting to forcibly dismantle our nuclear programme first and to overthrow our system through complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement. Consequently, the basis of negotiations, which were hardly moving towards a resolution of the nuclear issue, has been completely destroyed. If the United States wishes to coexist peacefully with the Democratic People's Repubiic of Korea by abandoning its hostile policy, the nuclear issue will be resolved properly.

With regard to the six-party talks, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is willing to resume them. Nevertheless, the increasingly hostile policy of the United States and the clandestine nuclear-related experiments recently revealed in South Korea are major stumbling blocks to the continuation of the talks. Given this serious situation, in which the basis of the negotiations has been totally destroyed and the secret nuclear-related experiments in South Korea have not yet been clarified, we are unable to participate in the talks aimed at discussing the nuclear-weapons programme. Therefore, if the six-party talks are to be resumed, the basis for the talks demolished by the United States should be properly restored and the truth of the secret nuclear experiments in South Korea clarified completely.

I take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the States Members of the United Nations for their active support for and understanding of our principled stand and hope that they will continue to contribute to the peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States by maintaining their balanced approach.

If the United Nations is to fulfil its mission for international peace and security and socio-economic development, it should play a leading role in addressing the major international issues in accordance with the objectives and principles of its Charter. To that end, the United Nations should no longer tolerate unilateralism and high-handedness, which constitute a serious violation of the Charter and existing international law. Disputes should be resolved peacefully through dialogue and negotiations, and there is no justification whatsoever for the unilateral use of force, such as the armed invasion of sovereign States.

Moreover, the Organization should be democratized so that all international issues can be resolved in the common interests of the Member States. In that regard, our delegation is of the view that the General Assembly should be empowered to review and approve the resolutions of the Security Council relating to sanctions and the use of force directly affecting international peace and security.

The reform of the Security Council should be undertaken in such a way as to enable it to ensure the full representation and interests of the non-aligned and other developing countries, which account for the overwhelming majority of Member States and contribute to a fair solution to disputes. In addition, practical measures should be taken to actively assist the developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development by strengthening the role of the United Nations and its affiliated organs in the socio-economic fields.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will in the future continue to regard independence, peace and friendship as the main ideals of its foreign policy and further strengthen its friendly and cooperative relations with all States Members of the United Nations that respect our sovereignty and actively contribute to international efforts to establish a just, equitable and new world order.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Radnaabazaryn Altangerel, chairman of the delegation of Mongolia.

Mr. Altangerel (Mongolia) (*spoke in French*): I wish to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I am confident that, under your stewardship, this session will successfully accomplish its mission.

The outgoing year has been a challenging time as the international community has grappled with a host of formidable challenges, including terrorist attacks, the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, violent internal conflicts, the surge of infectious diseases and natural disasters, in addition to persisting poverty and hunger and humanitarian emergencies.

Moreover, the war in Iraq and its aftermath have had a lasting impact on the fabric of international affairs in the Middle East and the world over. The bitter divisions that it engendered over how to ensure our collective security against terror and the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have posed a challenge and a test for the United Nations. It is gratifying to see that, in these difficult times, the world Organization has been able to regain its validity as the indispensable common house of the entire human family.

To make the United Nations a more effective instrument for pursuing all the priorities identified in the Millennium Declaration, world leaders pledged their resolve to undertake a set of bold measures to reform the world Organization so as to enable it to adequately address the manifold challenges ahead. The task of reforming the United Nations will undoubtedly require truly innovative approaches and the unfaltering commitment of Member States. In that respect, my delegation eagerly awaits the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and ensuing recommendations by the Secretary-General to be submitted to the General Assembly later this year.

In the meantime, my delegation highly commends the hard work and tireless efforts of Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. Resolutions 58/126 and 58/316, adopted under his skilful leadership, have proved to be by far the most far-reaching actions in recent years. Significant as they are, we should nevertheless aim higher and work with vigour to further reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations and to enable it to play that role more effectively.

On Security Council reform, I wish to join previous speakers in reiterating that its composition has long ceased to reflect current geopolitical realities. Mongolia reaffirms its support for a just and equitable enlargement of the Security Council by increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent seats, while ensuring the representation of developing and developed countries. In that regard, my Government supports the legitimate aspirations of such countries as Japan, Germany and India that are willing and able to shoulder greater responsibility in pursuit of international peace, security and development. Permanent seats, in our view, should also be allocated to Latin America and Africa. We do not, however, seek enlargement for its own sake — the expanded Security Council must be fully equipped to effectively react to the crises and conflicts of the new millennium. It is also our view that the veto power ought to be thoroughly reviewed, and efforts should be exerted to make the Council more democratic by enhancing its accountability and the transparency of its work.

There appears to be a broad consensus emerging that next year's high-level meeting to review the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the celebrations for the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations will galvanize us into making bold plans for the future — plans that will enable the family of nations to attain the ambitious, but achievable, goals set by the Millennium Declaration through a genuine display of solidarity, shared responsibility and effective partnership.

In his address to the Assembly last week the Secretary-General eloquently underscored the need to uphold the rule of law on both the international and domestic levels. Mongolia firmly believes that the rule of law and multilateralism are the fundamental principles of international relations in the twenty-first century. We must not falter or fail in pursuing them. The value of international law — the only viable framework of rules to govern the behaviour and interaction among States — must never be rated on its performance in the short term or for its ability to achieve near-sighted goals, nor should the value of dialogue and collective decision-making be called into question. Violation of those principles, even with the best of intentions, is dangerous. Let us remember that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Such actions would only bring about unforeseen and unintended effects that in the long term could be extremely harmful to established international mechanisms and processes and endanger the existing world order. That simple truth applies to every aspect of international life from the war on terror and the maintenance of peace and security to the management of international trade and environmental protection. Indeed, any unlawful act, once committed, will certainly have far greater repercussions than imagined at the outset — repercussions that will ultimately undermine its original objectives.

The persistent instability of some regions of the world and the people who suffer from internal armed conflicts represent the failure of world leaders to enforce the commitment they undertook in the Millennium Declaration to "spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war, whether within or between States". The violence and hatred that spread across the Darfur region of Sudan is one such tragic example.

In the Middle East, Mongolia notes with sadness the lack of progress on the path towards the peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We urge both sides to exercise utmost restraint, and support the efforts of the Quartet to ensure the implementation of the road map.

Mongolia is also concerned with the security situation in Iraq. The end of occupation and the formal restoration of Iraqi sovereignty on 28 June 2004 were laudable achievements, yet the persisting climate of violence and insecurity threatens to undermine the efforts of the international community to bring peace, security and stability to that country. Mongolia wholeheartedly supports the political process based on Security Council resolutions 1483 (2003) and 1546 (2004), and the actions undertaken by the interim Government to convene a national conference, create an interim council and hold elections early next year.

In Afghanistan, the approaching presidential and parliamentary elections are important milestones for a new, democratic State. The registration of more than 10 million voters, a significant portion of whom are women, clearly demonstrates the strong determination of the Afghan people to rebuild their country. Continued engagement of the international community remains crucial in maintaining peace and stability in Afghanistan and promoting the Bonn process.

The Korean nuclear crisis, and the resulting tensions on the Korean peninsula, cast dark clouds over all of North-East Asia. As a North-East Asian nation that rejects nuclear arms, Mongolia stands for a nuclear-weapon-free Korean peninsula and sees it as an important condition for the reconciliation of both Koreas and, therefore, for the peace and stability of the region. The continuation of the six-party talks towards a negotiated solution is of vital importance for the maintenance of peace and stability both on the Korean peninsula and in the region as a whole.

Indeed, strengthening international peace and security by supporting practical disarmament measures in every possible way has been one of the main priorities of Mongolia's foreign policy. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines and efforts to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have an immediate bearing on human security and social and economic development around the world.

As an ardent advocate of the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, and, in particular, nuclear disarmament, Mongolia believes that the full and effective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by both the nuclear and the non-nuclear weapon States will play a pivotal role in promoting international peace and nuclear security. In that context, Mongolia welcomes Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), adopted unanimously under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, as a meaningful step towards curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. However, we also believe that another significant step needs to be made towards nuclear disarmament: the early entry into force and universalization on a priority basis of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

The establishment of new and consolidation of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones should remain high on the international agenda. My Government will continue its efforts towards institutionalizing its nuclear-weapon-free status at the international level. Mongolia's internationally recognized and legally binding nuclear-weapon-free status could further contribute towards ensuring peace and stability in the region of North-East Asia and beyond.

The global war on terror remains high on the agenda of the international community. The 11 September attacks heralded the start of an unprecedented global campaign that united countries, large and small, in their resolve to stand together to combat terrorism.

And yet, despite the efforts of the international community, terrorism — like the Hydra of Lerna — seems to grow a new head for each one it loses.

The current year has been no exception to that sad pattern and civilians continue to be the target of attacks: in Iraq, both Iraqi and foreign nationals have been targeted; in Madrid, an attack was perpetrated against a commuter train; and, in the Russian Federation, there have been a string of attacks, the latest being the school massacre in Beslan, where children fell victim to an unprecedented atrocity.

Those events have highlighted once again the need for an effective international anti-terrorist campaign. The United Nations plays a central role in the fight against terror, coordinating the actions of its Member States and providing them with technical and legislative support. Mongolia supports the efforts of the Counter-Terrorism Committee aimed at its revitalization, and is looking forward to seeing the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate in operation. We also attach importance to the speedy finalization of draft international conventions on terrorism and nuclear terrorism currently in progress.

No matter how pressing the fight is against terror, it should not overshadow other issues that impact the daily lives of millions of people — from extreme poverty and hunger, to environmental degradation and HIV/AIDS, to health and education. The growing development disparity between rich and poor countries; increasing poverty and unemployment in the developing world, particularly in the least developed countries; the burden of debt and trade inequalities are of growing concern to us. We feel that development itself is an effective remedy for the root cause of those social ills, and thus attach particular importance to the implementation, at the national, regional and international levels, of the goals agreed to at the

Millennium Summit and in Monterrey, Johannesburg and Rome.

In this context, my delegation welcomes the New York Declaration on the Action Against Hunger and Poverty adopted on 20 September this year at the highest political level, which is aimed at fostering our common fight to overcome poverty and increase financing for development.

Mongolia welcomes the adoption by the World Trade Organization (WTO) members of the negotiating framework for the Doha trade round last July. This is of particular importance since the Doha Development Agenda provides significant opportunities for economic development and fair trade. We continue to favour special and differentiated treatment for developing countries, especially those with small and vulnerable economies whose populations are largely dependent for their livelihoods on being granted full market access and low import tariffs by the major trading partners.

One year from now, world leaders will meet here at the summit level to review progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. In preparation for this important event, Mongolia has produced its first national report on the implementation of the Goals.

In recent years, the world has witnessed the emergence of a new global commitment to democracy and good governance. A little over a year ago, Mongolia hosted the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which had the principal theme of democracy, good governance and civil society. Mongolia is now actively engaged in ensuring an effective follow-up to the conference both nationally and internationally.

In this respect, my delegation wishes to commend the proposal by the President of the United States aimed at establishing a democracy fund at the United Nations to help countries to lay the foundations of democracy by instituting the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, a free press, a multiparty system and trade unions. This fund would help support our endeavours to strengthen democracy and good governance and to develop an effective partnership with civil society in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

This year, Mongolians have participated in their fourth parliamentary election. During the election, the two main political parties in our country, the Motherland-Democracy Coalition and the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, won almost an equal number of seats in the Parliament. The two political parties have agreed to form a coalition Government on the basis of consensus-building, thereby demonstrating that democratic principles and values have firmly taken root in Mongolian soil. I have no doubt that the new coalition Government will wish to strengthen democracy and good governance, ensure sustained economic growth, reduce poverty and unemployment, and pursue a foreign policy that is open, multifaceted and proactive.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.